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General Assembly
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Official Records

15th plenary meeting
Thursday, 21 September 2006, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Ahmed Abdallah Sambi, President of the Union of the Comoros

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Union of the Comoros.

Mr. Ahmed Abdallah Sambi, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Abdallah Sambi, President of the Union of the Comoros, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sambi (*spoke in French*): Allow me, first of all, on behalf of the people of the Comoros, my Government and in my personal capacity, to sincerely congratulate you, Madam President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I am convinced that your eminent qualities will enable you to skilfully guide the work of this General Assembly. And I assure you of my readiness to work with you towards the successful accomplishment of the difficult mission entrusted to you by our General Assembly.

I take advantage of this opportunity to address our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and to express my deepest gratitude for the total and resolute commitment that he has always shown as head of our Organization, in particular, in the promotion of its ideals. We are all aware of the immeasurable efforts that he consistently deploys to defend the noble causes of our institution — the fight against poverty, the maintenance of peace in the world, to list but the main ones.

It is a great honour to take the floor today and to address this Assembly in my capacity as the newly elected President of the Union of the Comoros.

Allow me, therefore, at this historic time, to address my deep gratitude to all of the brother countries, to the United Nations system and to the African Union, in particular, for having become engaged in order to ensure that, for the first time, a democratic and peaceful political transition was able to take place in my country following free and transparent elections. That was indeed a first in the Comoros in 30 years of independence.

At this junction, I would like to underline the principal role played by the Republic of South Africa and by its President, Mr. Thabo Mbeki, in monitoring the electoral operations during the last presidential elections held in the Comoros. These elections are an exemplary model for Africa, in spite of certain imperfections.

I wish to convey to the Government and to the brethren people of the Republic of South Africa the sincere gratitude of the people of the Comoros and my personal acknowledgment for the unfailing support that they provided to the process of national reconciliation in the Comoros.

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I wish to convey to France, a country with which we have long-standing relations, the gratitude of the people and the Government of the Comoros for the constant support that it continues to provide to our country. We are convinced that France, the home country of human rights and freedoms, will meet the request of my Government to ensure that together we can guarantee a harmonious development in the Comoros, with democracy, the rule of law and good governance.

The People's Republic of China also deserves our deep admiration. With great vigour, this brother country has supported the development of the Comoros, ever since we gained independence more than 30 years ago. Through the quality of its relations, China has earned the friendship of all the people of the Comoros, and I remain convinced that it will continue to provide aid and support for my country's socio-economic development, a matter which remains a priority for my Government.

The Republic of Mauritius deserves a special mention for its invaluable support to my country throughout the national reconciliation process. By hosting the donor conference for the Comoros in December 2005, this brother country has demonstrated its great solidarity with the Comoros. We therefore express to it our deep appreciation here today.

Madagascar is a country with which we enjoy, over and above formal cooperation, very close relations by virtue of good neighbourliness, blood ties, a shared language and commerce, and it will remain a crucial partner for us. Madagascar has consistently demonstrated the importance of preserving common values, in particular through closer ties. I know that with this brother country we still have a long way to travel together, as our destinies are linked.

From this platform, I would be remiss not to convey our sincere gratitude to all other bilateral and multilateral partners of the Comoros, in particular, the League of Arab States, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the European Union, which, through the African Union, has provided valuable support and assistance in recent years in the context of the national reconciliation process.

I would like to thank sincerely the entire international community for the spirit of solidarity often expressed towards my country. Moreover, I remain convinced that the entire international community will continue to support the Comoros to help it complete national reconciliation. This is the sine qua non to ensure that a period of peace and political stability can take root in my country.

The people of the Comoros hope to see an end to the hellish cycle of coups d'état that have spoiled their daily lives over the past three decades. Since my election as President, my Government and I have strived to find the ways and means to promote social and economic development. We are aware of the need to diversify our cooperation abroad and to create conditions that are propitious to investment. On the domestic level, my Government is resolutely committed to fighting corruption and the embezzlement of public funds, to reestablishing an independent and equitable judiciary and we are committed to improving public housing. In order to achieve these goals, we require the backing our partners in support of our own efforts. That is why I make a solemn appeal to this Organization and to its Members to provide diverse forms of aid in order to ensure the success of this task.

I would be remiss if I did not also touch on the major global issues that we face. The situation in the Middle East remains critical. The conflict that occurred in Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah deeply hurt us in our flesh and in our hearts. Once again, we question the grounds for waging that war, the reasons for the destruction of economic infrastructure in that brother country, and finally the loss of thousands of lives. My country deeply deplores the shedding of innocent blood in Lebanon and in the Middle East. Why is there so much violence? Why is there so much suffering? Why is there so much inhumanity?

What is there to say about the situation in Palestine where the same scenario persists with its toll of martyrs, children and women who are victims of blind bombing? It is high time for the international community, working within the framework of the United Nations, to respond and to put an end to that conflict by ensuring that a negotiated solution is reached promptly.

We have the right to ask why the situation in Iraq remains catastrophic. It would be a shameful lie to say that we do not awake each day, learning of a growing number of deaths in each community in Iraq.

In Africa, even though some conflicts have been settled, instability and the risk of war and the threat of

war still persist in Chad, the Darfur region of the Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, just to mention some instances.

The question of Moroccan Sahara in no way leaves us indifferent. It is high time that the international community uses the prestige of the United Nations to expedite a solution based on law to that long-standing dispute. In any such situation, only the application of international law can guarantee the restoration of legality.

Asia is not spared its share of armed conflicts, for example those in Sri Lanka, Timor and southern Philippines. To mention all such conflicts would be tedious. Wherever or whenever war takes place, armed conflict inevitably results in millions of displaced persons, destroyed economic infrastructure and irreversible human, social and economic tragedy and damage. We must acknowledge and appreciate the vast effort of the international community to ensure that dialogue, discussion and negotiation prevail over force, destruction and war. Our Organization plays a major role in this respect. We must acknowledge that the crucial missions undertaken by the United Nations are irreplaceable.

We live in a time of paradoxes. On the one hand, we are living through an exceptional period marked by extraordinary growth of knowledge and know-how in the areas of technology, science, economic output, information technology and communications, just to mention a few. Yet on the other hand, we continue to devote almost unlimited financial and technical resources to producing more and more weapons capable of destroying our planet. Our countries are caught up in an arms race, instead of concentrating on development and combating disease and poverty.

At a time when science makes possible considerable progress, as I said earlier, the contradiction persists at the start of the twenty-first century that millions of individuals do not have enough to eat, millions of persons are totally destitute, and too often abject poverty, famine and devastating pandemics prevail. Many families live without shelter or in precarious and unhealthy conditions. Side by side with an increasingly prosperous world, more and more people live in increasingly difficult situations. We must ask ourselves how to overcome these contradictions in order to meet the challenges of the future.

Without going into detail, I wish to touch on the root causes of these problems, their consequences and prospects for the future. In my humble opinion, the reasons for these conditions are twofold. The first concerns governance in countries themselves. It will not surprise you to hear that in many countries, especially in the poorest countries, there is injustice, corruption and a lack of respect for fundamental human rights. The second point concerns international governance and all the related problems. While we live in a globalized world, we must recognize that degradation of the environment from uncontrolled pollution by business motivated by easy profit endangers the lives of future generations. In economic terms, we stand by powerless, witnessing deteriorating terms of trade, which plunge the poorest countries into ever-deepening poverty while the richest countries continue increasingly to prosper.

We believe that in order to achieve peace among men, to seek peace among countries and to ensure lasting peace for each and every one, we must prevent and resolve the conflicts and ills that beset our world. We meet in this forum to seek — and to find — solutions to the problems that I have touched upon in my statement. The permanent quest for material and social well-being should guide us towards a guarantee of better lives for our children. We must attack the root causes of the conflicts breaking out everywhere in the world. It is crucial that we combat pandemics such as AIDS, which has destroyed millions of people worldwide.

Mr. Majoor (Netherlands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Finally, I wish to use the words of Saint Francis of Assisi who said, "Give us love, my God, so that we might instil it where the forces of evil dominate". May God the almighty and most merciful inspire our decisions to ensure that a time of peace comes upon us and that we see an end to the spilling of the innocent blood of people in countries at war.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

The Union of the Comoros has entered into a new period since my accession to the post of head of the supreme Council following the free and transparent elections that were held in May and June. We hope to strengthen our ties with all friendly countries on the basis of mutual respect and common interests. We reaffirm our firm commitment to all international

conventions and agreements that seek to ensure peace, well being, security and development for all peoples of the world.

The Comoros occupies a distinct strategic position and embraces many civilizations. In spite of the challenges it faces, the Comoros has managed to preserve its African and Arab identities, and its affiliation with Islam: a religion of love, amity, tolerance and peace.

Our country is among the world's poorest, in spite of the priceless natural resources that we enjoy, such as agriculture, fishing and tourism, in addition to our strategic position in the Mozambique Channel. Incorrect economic politics applied since we gained independence in 1975 and political instability have been among the negative factors that made our country especially poor and backward. Average gross domestic product per capita stands at about $300 per year.

We have therefore developed a far-reaching plan seeking to provide substantial shelter for our population, in place of straw huts. We have sought to establish an independent judiciary in order to ensure the justice and equality of all before the law, and we are combating unemployment and poverty. If we are unable to provide decent and dignified housing and unable to guarantee a minimum of justice, then we will be unable to fight unemployment and poverty.

I would like once again to call upon the international community to continue to provide aid and assistance to my country. I assure members all that their generosity and assistance will reach secure hands and will be used properly and appropriately.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Union of the Comoros for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ahmed Abdallah Sambi, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Wade (*spoke in French*): Senegal and the Kingdom of Bahrain have had cordial relations of friendship, which have been enhanced and strengthened by reciprocal confidence and esteem. I am therefore pleased that Ms. Haya Rashed al-Khalifa is presiding over the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, during a key time in the history of our organization. Her election was an act of faith in the ideals of the United Nations and a message of hope for peoples who dream of a fairer, more equitable and more welcoming world for all. I offer her my warmest congratulations and assure her of the full cooperation of the Senegalese delegation as she carries out her high responsibilities in the service of the international community.

I would also like to convey to the Secretary-General a fraternal message of my greatest appreciation and gratitude for the ability and effectiveness with which he has always acted, enabling our Organization to better adapt to the requirements of the new millennium. At a time when he is preparing to leave his high post after 10 years of loyal and good service, it is with a sincere sense of pride that I say to him as an African compatriot, "Mr. Secretary-General, mission accomplished".

Last year, in this very Hall, we renewed our commitment to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. To be sure, since that time, some praiseworthy initiatives have occurred along the way, especially with measures to erase the multilateral debt of 18 least developed countries (LDCs) and to establish a levy on air tickets as a source of financing for development. I salute the efforts made by President Jacques Chirac of France and by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil for their promotion of this innovative mechanism to mobilize resources.

The problem of debt, however, in particular the debt of our continent, remains a hindrance to our development. In reality, the first question we should be asking ourselves, and which we do ask in Africa,

regards the evaluation of the debt: to take a look at the overindebtedness of Africa, to see exactly how much we owe, because it turns out that some countries are paying more than they owe. This is why I have long been advocating an x-ray of African debt to see how our countries have ended up in a situation whereby they devote much of their export earnings to paying off debt, contracted sometimes in dubious circumstances, to the detriment of their economic and social development programmes. The vicious circle of debt, compounded by unfair imbalances in international trade owing to agricultural subsidies in wealthy industrialized countries, has been particularly harmful for our farmers.

The failure of the agriculture negotiations in the Doha round, which is still fresh in our memory, shows how far we have yet to go in order to ensure respect by all for the rules of the game, so that world trade can be equally profitable for the giants of agro-business as for the small-scale cotton growers of Senegal, Benin, Burkina Faso and Mali, or for the small-scale coffee planters from Uganda, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. We say yes to free trade, but it must be fair and equitable.

The dizzying increase in the price of oil and its by-products since 2003 constitutes a new source of concern for non-producer countries. If the current trend continues, many countries will see their years of economic and social development efforts wiped out by the cost of oil. It will then be pointless to expound on the Millenium Development Goals on schooling, universal health care, access to drinking water for all, the fight against unemployment and the eradication of poverty.

In Africa, we have decided to take up the challenge by gathering together, on the initiative of Senegal, in the Association of Non-Oil Producing African Countries, in order to promote the development of bio-fuels. This green version of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has already been launched. With its vast cultivatable lands and enormous fresh water resources, Africa has, without a doubt, incomparable advantages in this sphere, and could even aspire to become the world's premier bio-fuel producer.

I would call upon all interested parties to join with us in this new green energy revolution, especially since it respects our environment and is in perfect harmony with the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol. Let us be optimistic in thinking that our planet will be a healthier place in the interest of all peoples, thanks to a civilization based on clean energy.

Turning to the situation in Africa, Senegal welcomes the progress made in democracy on the continent, as well as the significant progress achieved in the peaceful settlement of disputes. Such positive developments, however, have been thwarted by the persistence of some hotbeds of tension. In the Sudan, we hope and work for the expansion of the camp of peace, so that those protagonists who have thus far been left out of the peace process can sign the Abuja Agreement for a settlement of the Darfur crisis.

Yesterday, here in New York, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union addressed the issue of Darfur and emphasized that Africa must offer more efforts, more sacrifices and more commitment, but that it can find a solution only within the framework of close cooperation with the United Nations, for which it must indicate its readiness.

Turning to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Senegal welcomes the holding of elections last July. We hope that, whatever the outcome of the second round of presidential elections on 30 October, a reconciled Congolese people will work in the spirit of unity to utilize the tremendous potential of their country for peace, national unity and economic and social progress.

To my Ivorian brothers and sisters I would like to solemnly state that the need for a Côte d'Ivoire, healed of its wounds for good, has become most urgent — as much for themselves as for all of us in the subregion. I would thus urge Ivorian leaders of all ideologies to show that they can get beyond their differences to foster a return to lasting peace, more in accordance with the history of that brother country and with its proper destiny within the West African family and within our continent.

With regard to the Digital Solidarity Fund, which I proposed in December 2003 at the World Summit in the Information Society, as information technology and communications coordinator of The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), I am pleased to report that we have had satisfactory results. Since being launched in March 2005 with the support of nearly all Members of the United Nations, the Fund has gained the formal support of the People's Republic of

China. I would like warmly to thank the Chinese authorities for their support, which surely bolsters the Fund's universal nature. I request all States that have not yet done so to formalize their previously voiced commitment to the Fund by sending a letter to the Executive Secretary of the Fund in Geneva. I would recall that cities too can become members. I take this opportunity also to recall that the Digital Solidarity Fund is supported exclusively through voluntary public and private contributions, the amount of which is up to member States, cities or local governments.

We would suggest that countries commit themselves to the so-called Geneva Principle, which consists of, including in calls for bids in the digital technology field, a contribution to the Fund of 1 per cent of the value of the goods and services linked to information and communications technology. Fund resources are managed in strict transparency through the Foundation Council with a tripartite membership: local authorities, private enterprise and civil society.

The General Assembly's recent High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development shows the extent to which we must continue our joint efforts to address an extremely relevant and complex problem which will be with us for a long time to come. International migration has always been a part of the history of peoples. What is new is the current scope and form of illegal immigration. For a wide variety of reasons, with North-South imbalances not the least of them, illegal migration necessitates an approach of joint partnership instead of unilateral solutions.

In Senegal, we have already decided to resolutely combat this phenomenon by strengthening the surveillance of our coasts with the support of our European partners. We have already signed an agreement with Spain, and we shall sign a similar agreement with France next week. The purpose of these agreements is to regulate migratory flows to developed countries, thereby combating illegal migration. The smugglers, largely responsible for this, are constantly being hunted down and punished in accordance with the law.

Along with the dismantling of clandestine networks, we have launched our Return to Agriculture programme, through which we are setting up rural farms in order to enable our young people to engage in modern agriculture and animal husbandry. This will give them reasons to stay at home and avoid tragic ventures which often end at the bottom of the sea or in the desert. That is how we implement the principle we have adopted in Senegal: zero illegal emigration.

The year 2006 marks a decisive turning point in the history of the United Nations, with reforms under way to adapt to changing world realities. These include the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, which I hope will allow for enhanced promotion of human rights and more effective management of post-conflict periods.

As for Security Council reform, Senegal deplores the deadlock in the negotiations, which is to the detriment of regions such as ours. Africa, while it is the focal point of the Council's agenda, does not have a single permanent seat. That is a historical injustice which must be corrected as soon as possible by granting Africa a seat, with the right to veto, apart from the overall reform package.

The Palestinian people, too, are victims of injustice, depriving them of a legitimate right to a viable, free and independent State. History teaches us that war, despite its long list of innocent victims and the toll it takes on civilian infrastructure — bitter experiences recently relived by the peoples of Lebanon and Palestine — will never overcome a people's will if it aspires to take its rightful place in the community of free nations. The right to freedom and independence is part of the destiny of peoples. Its attainment can be delayed by historic circumstances, but destiny will always be achieved. It is better to understand this in time than to regret it too late.

As Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Senegal will continue to ensure that the Organization continues its efforts towards a negotiated, just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict so that all of the suffering peoples of the region can finally live in peaceful coexistence.

With regard to Iran, the Assembly is aware of my position. There should be dialogue without prior conditions, meaning that the protagonists should sit down around a negotiating table.

Senegal has always acted in the service of peace and continues to do so more than ever before at a time when we face such major challenges.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Senegal for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Adamkus: The previous session of the General Assembly created high expectations for reform and comprehensive renewal that would ensure the continued success and relevance of the United Nations well into the twenty-first century. Thanks to the initiatives launched by the Secretary-General, today we have the Peacebuilding Commission; the Central Emergency Response Fund; the recognition of a collective responsibility to protect, where a State fails to protect its citizens from genocide and crimes against humanity; and a new Human Rights Council. Lithuania is committed to work to ensure that the new Human Rights Council can strengthen the protection and promotion of human rights around the world.

It is said that State-building is a long and difficult process. That is precisely why United Nations assistance in this area is much needed. The Peacebuilding Commission brings renewed hope that post-conflict countries can avoid slipping back into chaos. But institutions alone do not count if they are not supported by political will. Strong international commitment is necessary in offering hope of a better life wherever nations are struggling to get back on their feet.

Lithuania's lead in a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan has given us first-hand understanding of the vital importance of the sustainability and continuity of such efforts. However, whether in Afghanistan or elsewhere, our efforts will be successful only to the extent that the nations themselves are fully engaged in post-conflict State-building and rational, market-sound economic development. Today, we welcome an increasing Afghan capacity to rebuild the country, and we are encouraged by the expansion of the International Security Assistance Force area of responsibility. On the other hand, the challenges ahead will require ever-increasing focus and further efforts on the ground.

The tragic events in the Middle East over the past 12 months have vividly demonstrated the human and financial costs of inability to reach compromises and final solutions regarding problems that have divided societies and poisoned the region for long years. Thus, the effective promotion of a comprehensive peace plan in the Middle East is topical as never before. Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and major donor conferences offer hope for the development of a sovereign and strong Lebanon. Let us make this a reality by pooling our efforts and contributing to this cause today, not tomorrow. The two States of Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace is our goal.

Few security issues are as dramatic as terrorism, with its indiscriminate targeting of civilian lives in an ever-expanding geography. Five years ago, the people of this very city suffered a brutal and cold-blooded attack on the values of humanity and tolerance that forever changed the world as we knew it. It is therefore essential that we unite our efforts to ensure that this never happens again. We welcome the Assembly's adoption of the United Nations Global Anti-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), and we call for the completion of work on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism as soon as possible and for its being put into practice.

To succeed in our fight against terrorism, we must not yield to fears that separate; instead, we must build on our common humanity. We therefore hope the Alliance of Civilizations will become an integral part of our interaction, promoting solidarity, inclusion and understanding and reinforcing the values and principles which extremists seek to undermine.

Furthermore, we should redouble our efforts to tackle the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation. As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the

challenges to non-proliferation continue to mount. Lithuania strongly supports the strengthening of the effectiveness and efficiency of the IAEA Safeguards System. Compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the relevant Security Council resolutions is a key to global security. We therefore call on all States to exercise full compliance in this area, vital to our common peace and security.

At the same time, security, as it is typically defined, has a broader meaning now. We should deal with climate change, energy security and dire water or food shortages with equal attention.

We must be firm in our common fight against terrorism, but we must be just as firm in fighting poverty and upholding the dignity of the individual. We need to put the available resources to the best possible use, such as ensuring significant progress in the implementation of the internationally agreed upon Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Lithuania is proud to follow up on these commitments. As a new donor country, we know that it will take time to measure up to the high expectations in the field. We provide increasing amounts of advice and assistance, in more and more places. Over the past year alone, our development aid has grown by 60 per cent. We are determined to further increase our aid and diversify its geography. We remember what it meant to receive help when we needed it, and we know and accept the responsibility to now help others in our turn.

Only a comprehensive approach can ensure that the inextricable link between security, development, and human rights that we all agreed on will translate into a real and positive impact on the lives of countless millions of human beings around the world.

As we pursue the commitments already undertaken, we must look beyond tomorrow to be able to empower the United Nations to deal successfully with the challenging diversity of issues and concerns of all our nations.

It is natural that in debating such vital issues as the reform of the United Nations, we, the Member States, have disagreements. However, we should also remember that, while we discuss our disagreements here in New York, millions of the poorest are suffering from degrading starvation, millions of children are dying from preventable diseases, and millions of people have nothing to rely on but the United Nations to protect them. If we want the United Nations to effectively deal with development challenges, counter new deadly threats and restore the value of human life to countless people around the world, an ongoing change is a must.

I therefore urge the United Nations to continue in the vital areas of management reform and mandates review in order to increase the Organization's efficiency and effectiveness for the benefit of all.

We also urge strengthening of international environmental governance and translating the World Summit agreement on the collective responsibility to protect into a willingness to act, when such action is needed, and ending impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community.

A vital element of the United Nations renewal is the issue of Security Council reform. Lithuania has consistently supported reform, in terms of both membership and working methods. Enhancing the Council's legitimacy through such reform will enable it to improve the discharge of its primary responsibilities vis-à-vis international peace and security.

A renewed Security Council should give adequate voice and representation to all regions. As a member of the East European Group, Lithuania believes that this Group, too, deserves better representation on the future Security Council. Our collective experience of dramatic and peaceful transformation of our societies has a lot to offer. In this respect, we believe, our Group can offer an excellent candidate for the post of Secretary-General.

Despite its flaws, the United Nations remains the only organization with the potential to embody a truly global and effective spirit of multilateralism. Therefore, whatever we do, we should continue to ask ourselves: are we, the Member States, doing enough to help the United Nations fulfil its promise to mankind? We are a world family and we have responsibilities to one another.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Lithuania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Albert Pintat, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Albert Pintat, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Albert Pintat, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Pintat (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan; English text provided by the delegation*): A decade ago, it was said that with the end of the cold war we had reached the "end of history." Over the years, this view has been largely discredited.

Much of the world, especially the West, paid scant attention to the sense of injustice shared by many peoples and communities around the world. What we have witnessed, with a mixture of horror, sympathy and unease over the last 10 years, has been the return of history. The fall of the Twin Towers, the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon and the terrorist attacks in London and Madrid have shaken the foundations of the secular State. These events have been said to represent a "clash of civilizations," but I reject the reductive, indeed, misleading division between North and South, East and West, and Christians and Muslims.

The greatest achievements in the West were the result of a complex process of cultural exchange between East and West. The free trade of ideas fostered innovation and advances in understanding. We must therefore reject this notion of a mentality that conceives an essential clash between "us" and "them". I believe that we are living through a turbulent and bloody struggle between, on the one hand, the forces of extremism, present in both the East and the West, and, on the other hand, secular tolerance, also fortunately manifested everywhere on Earth.

Andorra is an old country whose borders have remained unchanged since 1278. Our history is one of survival. We were in existence when the Cathars fled the might of the first Crusade to seek refuge in our mountain pastures. We survived the French Revolution, the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. History has taught us that power demands restraint. And our own experiences have taught us — and the past few weeks have reinforced this costly lesson — that displays of military might, intended to shock and awe, cannot, by themselves, bring about the desired result.

Is it not paradoxical that at this moment, when the need for civilized discussion between people is greater than ever, this venerable institution is deemed inconsequential? We need, of course, to continue the process of its reform. As an idea, however, this place embodies all of our hopes. As a humanitarian agency with a host of vital social programmes, the United Nations does inestimable work. As a forum for rational discourse committed to reaching global understanding, its work is absolutely necessary. This should be the forum in which we try to understand and correctly interpret the crossroads at which we find ourselves. The United Nations signifies the world's moral conscience — the principle of equality and solidarity and the protection of human rights and human dignity. It marks the path to development.

Violence and the rise of religious extremism have roiled the globe. We all are prey to the unease felt over the future of the secular State. In one sense, however, the very idea of the nation-State lies at the heart of many of our problems. It encourages us to believe in the rhetoric of "us" against "them", in exclusive identities and in outdated ethnocentric discourse. It obfuscates the growing division between rich and poor that transcends countries, nations, and continents. It neglects the fact that most people on this planet seek only that which will permit them to live in a dignified manner and be happy in their lives.

Indeed, many States, especially those whose boundaries reflect a legacy of colonialism, are constituted without regard to the religious or ethnic backgrounds of their inhabitants. The civil wars that are currently tearing apart some countries are but one example of the enormous difficulties presented by the artificial construction of such States.

We must not forget that, historically, the West has never been a good example in terms of religious tolerance. On the contrary, one might cite the twelfth-century expulsion of the Jews from England or recall

the forced conversion of Muslims after the fall of Granada in 1492, the Inquisition, or the persecution of the Protestant Huguenots who fled France during the sixteenth century. Yet in the East — in Jerusalem or Tehran, for example — Muslims, Jews and Christians coexisted into the early twentieth century. Those great cosmopolitan centres flourished in an atmosphere of genuine religious tolerance.

The original meaning of the term secular described those religious orders that looked outwards to the world at large. In the sixteenth century a new notion of tolerance signified a willingness to accept different Protestant sects in towns and cities in Northern Europe. But our modern-day understanding of tolerance, in which people of all religions can live together, required centuries. Curiously, this version of history has been forgotten by those who see secularism as being opposed to belief. The notion of secularism has never been oppositional to religion but rather denotes a mentality willing to contemplate uncertainty and imperfect knowledge. It does not confuse questions of faith with scientific questions or seek to disarm the individual's liberty of conscience.

Secularism, therefore, recognizes the shared fallibility of the human race. Religious faith can be taught, but it cannot be imposed. It cannot lead to violence and has to coexist with the secular state. Our common humanity requires us to respect each other through our diversity.

The genius of tolerance lies in the ability to listen — to truly listen and attempt to understand. To listen and learn is not an act of weakness. Indeed, it is the extremist's display of strength or desire for revenge that represents a fatal weakness. Again and again, in the course of history, we see that a mighty spirit precedes a fall. Recently we have stood by and witnessed in dismay the catastrophic results that ensue from the deployment of military might against determined guerrilla warfare.

Most of today's ills have their roots in old and unresolved problems, but the rhetoric of violence which surrounds us polarizes us even further, undermines the possibility of finding a lasting solution and widens the lines of fracture. We have to think of ourselves as a single global community where we are all interdependent.

In the Middle East, we recognize the need for Israel's security, as we recognize the need for Palestine to become a viable State.

Andorra is located in a part of the world which has always been a place where different cultures have met and lived in shared prosperity: the Mediterranean. Today, this has become a new frontier full of tension. As Europeans, we must seek to revitalize the area, recalling its ancient history as a home to many civilizations and their corresponding values — from Rome to Byzantium and from Athens to Tangiers.

Andorra, like many small countries, long relied on its isolation for its survival. But in our global world, mountains can no longer protect us. International concerns press upon us. Today's world is heterogeneous, imperfect and lacking in a common vision: there are no easy solutions, and questions cannot be viewed in monochrome. The Millennium goals that we debated here with such hope are in danger of receding into distant memory. Is this the fault of the United Nations? Let us not turn our backs on the masses, who are tired of suffering, and who see the United Nations as being their only hope. We must allow their voices to be heard and welcome them into the global community. The time has come for us to act on our promises.

We must recognize that collectively we are the United Nations. We represent humanity as a whole. We are betraying it if we do not seek to make the United Nations a more robust and efficient machine. If we continue blindly, caring only for our national self-interest, we betray its trust. Multilateralism, which we as a group embody in this Hall, is the path that will lead to many of the solutions. The plight of the unfortunate should not fall on deaf ears. We should join together to solidify democratic institutions and processes, and in so doing fight against poverty, war, disease, illiteracy and corruption. That should be our common cause. It is only through this joint effort that we will be able to raise our approach to a collectively ethical and morally correct level.

When people do not have enough to eat and when they are deprived of essential freedoms and justice, there is only one option left open to them: to seek a better life by whatever means they can, leaving behind their native lands. We are currently witnessing mass migration from the poorest parts of the world to the richer; all too often, the journey is tragically cut short

on the high seas. This weighs heavily on our conscience. Erecting barriers to prevent this process will never work: their desperation is too great. Millions of human beings are orphaned from their homelands — we should have solutions to offer them. There is no place where this issue is more pressing than sub-Saharan Africa. The high risk of death does not impede people from attempting to reach the shores of Europe, simply because their lives at home have become unbearable.

We require a concerted and global plan for migration. This can be achieved only if we act together through the United Nations to provide the human and material resources necessary to step-up to the challenge. In so doing we will better the lives of millions of people who, quite justifiably, feel cruelly disenfranchised from the human family. As the writer Juan Goytisolo put it, "The world provides a home for those who are homeless". The United Nations should certainly be their refuge.

In line with this, Andorra stands ready to underline its commitment to the United Nations system and to development as a whole. Two days ago here in New York, we signed an agreement with UNICEF to provide €1 million in financing over a five-year period to help children suffering from HIV/AIDS in Cameroon. Civil society in our small country is also playing its part; the Andorran National Committee for UNICEF will contribute €500,000 to this project over the same period.

It is true that our world today is a dangerous place. But there is still immense hope, and this spurs us on. There is no definitive answer to the problems that our societies face, and it has been said that our lives as human beings cannot be perfected. We have a duty, however, to continually ask questions and to have the courage to overcome the problems of our age.

Our ideas are the greatest advantage that we have; they are the motors of progress. For us, this means democracy, shared prosperity, tolerance, the rule of law, respect for human rights and the pursuit of freedom through the defence of fundamental human liberties. Those are the best weapons we have to fight absolutism and inequality. It is here at the United Nations that our voices should be heard and here that we should be able to defend those principles.

Finally, I should like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his great work over the past 10 long and complicated years. We salute and congratulate him for all that he has done to maintain and apply the principles enshrined in the Charter. I speak for all Andorrans in expressing my esteem for him and his great efforts.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Albert Pintat, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Excellency The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

His Excellency The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mosisili (Lesotho): My delegation associates itself with the compliments extended to Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, on her election to the presidency of the General Assembly, to her predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, and to the Secretary-General. It would be remiss of us if we did not express our delight at the fact that our proceedings are being led by a lady President this year.

We meet in the aftermath of the worst conflict in the Middle East. This conflict has brought untold misery and has resulted in unnecessary loss of life, displacement of people and wanton destruction of property. In the midst of all this, the Security Council remained pitifully helpless.

The delay by the Security Council in reacting to the Israel-Lebanon conflict graphically demonstrated the Council's extreme inadequacy in responding urgently, with prompt and decisive action, to international armed conflicts. It is precisely such

failures that lend credence to the call for reform of the United Nations, in particular, reform of the Security Council. In this regard, the well-known position of the African Group has never made more sense than it does now.

The African continent still experiences internal armed conflicts. The African Union (AU), without usurping the powers of the Security Council, has taken the initiative to resolve some of those conflicts. However, the African Union's resources and capacities are limited. It is against this background that the African Union, through its Peace and Security Council, resolved to hand over the Darfur mission to the United Nations. It is our hope and earnest plea that the current misunderstanding between the United Nations and the Government of the Sudan will be resolved as a matter of urgency. The United Nations, particularly the Security Council, cannot afford to be a helpless spectator to yet another genocide.

My delegation calls for concerted efforts by the international community, and by the United Nations in collaboration with the African Union, to find a lasting solution to the crises in Somalia and Côte d'Ivoire. With regard to Somalia, the efforts of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development to broker an agreement between the Transitional Government and the Islamic Courts must be complemented by the international community, specifically, the United Nations. There is also an urgent need to lift the arms embargo so that the Transitional Government may be able to function.

We congratulate the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who, following decades of undemocratic rule and civil war, recently exercised their inalienable right to elect a Government of their choice. It is our hope that with continued assistance from the United Nations, particularly from United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and other partners, the second round of elections, scheduled for 29 October 2006, will proceed peacefully.

We likewise commend the people of Burundi on the signing of a peace agreement between the Government and the Forces nationales de libération (FNL). This should enable them to focus on the development issues of their country.

Furthermore, we congratulate the Government of the Republic of Uganda on the initiative aimed at finding a political solution to the protracted war with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). That war has taken its toll on the people of Uganda and has contributed to instability in the region.

We express our solidarity with the peoples of Palestine and Western Sahara in their struggle for self-determination and their quest for everlasting peace. Surely, things do not have to deteriorate to the level of the Israel-Lebanon conflict before the international community snaps into action in these two volatile situations.

Following the 2005 World Summit, and in the context of the reform of the United Nations, my delegation notes with satisfaction the creation of the Human Rights Council, the operationalization of the Peacebuilding Commission and the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund, among other achievements. These are timely events that continue to prove the relevance of this Organization in the twenty-first century.

My delegation also notes the efficient manner in which the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs responded in some countries that faced major man-made or natural disasters over the past year. That can be attributed to the newly established Central Emergency Response Fund. It is our hope that the Fund will continue to live up to the expectations of Member States.

The United Nations was founded on the interlinked and mutually reinforcing pillars of development, international peace and security and human rights. The issue of development deserves the undivided attention and commitment of Member States, just as do the issues of peace, security and human rights. Hence the call at the 2005 World Summit for a timely and full realization of development goals and objectives agreed upon at major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.

My delegation is deeply concerned that Member States were largely divided between the South and the North regarding how to follow up on the development section of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1). We are indeed disheartened that, due to a divergence of views on this important issue, the General Assembly was not in a position to suggest concrete actions to implement commitments made at the relevant conferences and summits.

It is past time for the General Assembly to suggest concrete actions on how to, among other things: fulfil the commitments to address the special needs of Africa; seriously address the uneven progress made by the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); address issues relating to trade, agricultural subsidies and the transfer of vitally needed resources to developing countries; and fully implement the global partnership for development as set out in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus, the Johannesburg Plan of Action and the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

My delegation hopes that at its current session the General Assembly will, among other things, finalize all details regarding the convening of a review conference on the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. Furthermore, we hope that all stakeholders will reaffirm their commitment to the full implementation of the outcomes of the recently held high-level meetings on migration and development and on review of the implementation of the 2001 Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries.

There is definitely an inherent global benefit, for all countries, in the pursuit of development cooperation based on genuine partnership and mutually beneficial arrangements. The realities of globalization, liberalization and interdependence have demonstrated the inadequacies of the traditional modes of financing for development, such as official development assistance, foreign direct investment, trade and other forms of capital flows.

If all Member States are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, certain measures must be undertaken. First, official development assistance must be doubled. It must also be timely, predictable and dependable. Secondly, all partnerships with New Partnership for Africa's Development must be linked to the Millennium Development Goals and other agreed upon development goals and targets. Finally, there must be complete debt cancellation, not just for the highly indebted poor countries, but for the least developed countries as well.

The suspension of the Doha Development Agenda negotiations was a disquieting development for some of our countries. While Africa had on various occasions expressed concern on the limited progress made in negotiations on issues of major interest to the continent, our faith in the negotiations never wavered. We truly believed, and we still do, that there is a common understanding that trade is the most effective route out of poverty, and that the prosperity and security of all nations, rich or poor, strong or weak, are dependent on, inter alia, free and fair trade.

Much has been said about the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Its consequences are now commonly understood. Conferences at the highest levels have been held, subregionally, regionally, continentally and globally. These conferences discussed at length the importance of economic, technological and medical developments to subdue and defeat HIV/AIDS in affected countries. It is now time for words to be followed by concrete actions targeting, in particular, infected and affected groups and lowering infection prevalence rates.

My delegation regrets the paralysis that has befallen the United Nations disarmament machinery. Also regrettable is the failure of the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to produce a consensus substantive outcome document. Equally regrettable is the absence of a section on non-proliferation and disarmament in the 2005 Summit Outcome Document. The coup de grâce, however, is the failure to agree on an outcome document of the 2006 United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons In All Its Aspects, adopted in 2001.

Thus, Member States should not run away from the blatant truth that, during the sixtieth session of the Assembly, the stalemate that, over the past four years, has characterized negotiations regarding non-proliferation and disarmament, finally became abundantly clear to all nations. For small arms and light weapons remain the weapons of choice that are indiscriminately used in conflicts, as well as in other forms of violence, including criminal behaviour. Yet they are still so cheap and so easily accessible that, in some remote villages, they are exchanged for chickens.

Terrorism continues to pose the greatest threat to human security. In this regard, I wish to welcome the adoption by the General Assembly of the United

Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288). However, it is unfortunate that the General Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee on International Terrorism has still not been able to conclude a comprehensive convention on an international response to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The fact remains that Member States have a moral obligation to overcome their long-standing differences on the definition of terrorism. Failure to agree on a definition, however, cannot and must not be used as an excuse for not decisively confronting the scourge of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1696 (2006) on 31 July, and the subsequent response by the Iranian Authorities, it is our fervent hope that all parties to the issue will constructively engage in seeking a lasting solution to avert possible economic and diplomatic sanctions and to guarantee Iran's peaceful nuclear programme.

Last but certainly not least, this session marks the end of tenure of office for an illustrious son of the African soil, a distinguished diplomat and statesman, in the person of His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan. He leaves a legacy for this august body which every one of us must emulate in the best interests of the peoples we represent and serve. It is therefore befitting to pay tribute to him and to wish him and Mrs. Nane Annan a well-deserved rest and a future filled with happiness. He will, needless to say, be inundated with our calls for his wisdom and advice in the service of mankind.

Our standing ovation and the declaration made in honour of His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan during the last African Union Summit held in Banjul, Gambia, said it all. With typical eloquence, he delivered a few days ago in the Assembly before the world's leaders a rich statement filled with emotion. No wonder that even the world leaders accorded him a standing ovation. His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan has run his lap with excellence. He deserves a medal of honour.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the statement he has just made.

The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa.

Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Malielegaoi (Samoa): Forty-four years ago, Samoa became independent, and when we joined the United Nations it was a reaffirmation of our support for the principle of multilateral cooperation which the United Nations embodied. It was also our statement that all States matter, that none was too small and weak to be represented in the United Nations on equal terms with the large and strong nations of the world. Those sentiments underpinned Samoa's belief in the United Nations as an expanding global family and its Member States as the custodians entrusted with the future of our world and the generations to come.

In essence, lasting peace and the sustained prosperity of the world depended on harmonious cooperation and effective global partnership amongst all nations. Those were the ideals that motivated us to be part of the united family of nations, and they remain relevant and valid for our country today.

A year ago, we met here in an act of solidarity, to chart a new course for our Organization that is aligned to meet the emerging challenges confronting our world today. Our Summit Outcome document was not just a road map to guide the work of our Organization. While it mirrored the intergovernmental nature and diverse membership of our Organization, the document, ultimately, was a reminder of the cooperative and shared interests we all have regarding issues vital to the United Nations and its Member States. It also brought to bear the importance of global partnerships in these times of interdependence, for the achievement

of sustainable development and peace and security for our peoples.

In less than twelve months, we have transformed rhetoric into reality. Solid progress has been made in the implementation of the Summit document. The Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission are now operational; credible reforms in the Secretariat and management have been implemented; a Central Emergency Response Fund has been set up; and a Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy had been unanimously adopted. But, as we well know, that is just the start; the real work lies ahead. In our view, it is imperative that even in the early stages of their work, those bodies must immediately adhere to the guiding principles of respect, integrity, credibility and professionalism to ensure that the objectives of relevance, efficiency and transparency envisioned for the Organization are delivered.

Development, security and human rights are the three pillars of the United Nations. All are mutually reinforcing. The United Nations commitment to the achievement of these goals, particularly for the least developed countries (LDCs) and the developing countries, is set out in a number of internationally agreed initiatives such as the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, the Johannesburg Plan of Action, the Millennium Development Goals, and the Mauritius Strategy for Small Island Developing States.

Those development frameworks provide for global partnerships for the achievement, in small and vulnerable economies, of economic growth, sustainable development and the resilience to endure external shocks. Samoa looks forward to the implementation of the partnerships indicated in the development frameworks approved by the United Nations.

In Samoa's case, the implementing framework for the partnerships of the Government with the donor community, civil society and the private sector are designed to address the development priorities of our country as set out in the Strategy for the Development of Samoa. It is through such partnerships that we look too, for the effective delivery of programmes that address major health challenges such as HIV/AIDS and the potential threat of the avian bird flu. Similarly, there is the collaborative work with our partners to support the empowerment of our women.

As to security and the specific context of stability and harmony within communities, I cannot overemphasize the importance of global actions to control and limit the availability of small arms weapons. These weapons in the hands of the wrong people can easily destabilize communities and plunge small nations into deadly conflict. We therefore renew our call for the early implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

During the review of the Brussels Programme of Action this week, I shared with Member States the challenges that continue to confront my country. Samoa is both a least developed country and a very small island developing State. The United Nations has received a proposal for Samoa to be graduated from the list of LDCs. However, the vulnerabilities and the fragility that characterize our small island economy, as reflected in Samoa's poor ranking under various economic vulnerability indices have, not gone away.

Working closely with our traditional development partners, we have tried our best to develop and manage our economy, and we have made good strides in improving the welfare of our people. But we know very well from grim past experience that it takes just one devastating disaster to wipe out our modest achievements and set back the economy for years. Our request, therefore, is for Samoa's graduation from the list of LDCs to be deferred and reconsidered when Samoa has met the graduation threshold according to the economic vulnerability index.

Last week we broke new ground with the discussion for the first time in the United Nations context of the multidimensional aspects of international migration and development. The enthusiasm to consider migration and development as a priority concern in the United Nations agenda was well supported. The concrete outcomes that emerged from that initiative will ultimately depend on the willingness of the source countries and the destination countries to work out imaginative and humane arrangements beneficial to both.

The significance of international migration, whether permanent or temporary, as a development option for our region has not escaped the attention of Pacific leaders. It is also an option that raises difficult issues that touch on the welfare and humanitarian

treatment of migrants, as well as on sensitive considerations on the part of receiving countries.

In just six years into the millennium, it has become more and more evident that many of the challenges we face have significant global dimensions. They are borderless, do not discriminate between developed and developing countries and have no respect for national sovereignty. Those global concerns, imaginatively called problems without passports, include climate change, epidemics, humanitarian concerns, conflict containment, security concerns and terrorism. By their very nature, the successful resolution of those challenges requires a collective and concerted effort of the whole United Nations membership, because no one country or group of countries is capable of tackling them alone.

Terrorism, in its various forms and manifestations, is responsible for the horror and fear that has gripped the world's attention in recent years. No country is immune to the reaches of terrorism and we are all affected in varying degrees. We must continue to be resolute in our fight against terrorism. Let us reiterate in the strongest terms possible that terrorist acts, committed under whatever pretext or purpose, can never be justified as morally acceptable. Equally, countering terrorism does not confer immunity from the rule of law, nor the abandonment of the principles of a civilized society.

The unanimous adoption of a United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy two weeks ago was both a condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and a commitment by Member States to take concrete preventative measures, collectively and individually. The work ahead is to turn commitment into implementation.

The Middle East conflict continues to defy attempts to usher in a new era of trust and hopeful beginnings for the region. Sustainable peace remains an elusive goal, permanently out of our Organization's reach as long as the root causes of the problem are not addressed. Too much is at stake.

Let us not forget the voiceless majority, unwillingly caught in the crossfire of the conflict, who yearn for a lasting peace. We should, therefore, not be judgmental or partisan in our approach. Ultimately, the Palestinian people need a permanent and an independent State, living in peace, with a secure Israel. The Security Council, by responding decisively to recent developments in the Lebanon-Israel conflict, gives us hope that perhaps an eventual resolution of that long drawn-out conflict is finally within sight.

The humanitarian and security situation in Darfur is a cause for concern. The recent resolution adopted by the Security Council will, we hope, be agreeable to all the parties with a genuine desire to expeditiously resolve the issue.

We continue to hope that the elected Governments of Iraq and Afghanistan will ultimately succeed in achieving conditions that will allow their peoples to live meaningful lives and consolidate the democratization of their societies.

Many other countries in different parts of the world are also still mired in tragic conflict and look to the United Nations and its stronger Members for peacekeeping arrangements that can give time for those communities in strife to re-establish and find lasting solutions. Samoa, despite our small size, will continue to support that important work. At present we contribute police personnel for the United Nations Missions in the Sudan, Liberia, Timor-Leste and in the Solomon Islands.

Climate change issues remain a priority for the Pacific region. In our small islands, natural catastrophes are capable of destruction that devastates the entire country. They bring great pain and upheaval to the lives of our people, as well as set back the national economy for years. We know that from repeated past experience. The need, therefore, for good early-warning systems for natural disaster alerts in our Pacific region is a priority. The willingness of our partners to assist and share expertise in that area is most welcomed.

The Global Environment Facility Trust Fund — recently replenished for the fourth time — demonstrates very well the joint partnership between the developed and the developing countries in implementing programmes to address environmental problems.

Samoa continues to strongly support international and regional efforts to combat global warming and environmental degradation. In our view, the evidence of global warming and its causes are well established. Apportioning blame and point scoring should no longer be allowed to deflect efforts at effective and collective responses. We now know that concerted action should

have been taken much earlier and further delays would simply make the size of the problem greater and the solutions more costly.

Good progress has been achieved in the efforts to reform our Organization. I would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his inspirational work in balancing the interests of Member States, which did not always coincide, and for his influence that made it possible for agreement to be reached on the reform agenda. I thank the Secretary-General for his courage and leadership, so that even in the face of great controversy, the United Nations remained relevant to the crises and challenges that our world and the Organization has faced during his watch.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa for the statement just made.

His Excellency Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Robert Fico, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic.

His Excellency Mr. Robert Fico, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Robert Fico, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, and I invite him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Fico (Slovak Republic): I would like to express my deepest appreciation and most sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for the invaluable work and tireless dedication with which he led this Organization into the twenty-first century. The Secretary-General has led the United Nations well and he will be remembered with praise for it. May I use this opportunity also to state our full support to his successor, who will have to deal with the difficult challenges the United Nations is going to face.

Before proceeding to my remarks, I would like to point out that Slovakia fully subscribes to the statement delivered earlier by the President of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

It gives me great pleasure to address the General Assembly today, even more so as it is the first time I am speaking from this rostrum as the Prime Minister of Slovakia. My Government — formed only three months ago — is committed to a foreign policy that emphasizes effective multilateralism and promotes democracy, international peace and security, greater respect for human rights — including the rights of persons belonging to national and other minorities — rule of law, social equity and environmental protection. We are focused on building a social state where economic growth goes along with the growth of the standard of living of the people.

All of us know that the United Nations is once again at a crossroads, as we face the historic test of multilateralism. The humanitarian disaster in Sudan, recent conflict in Lebanon, continuing dispute over the Iranian nuclear programme, violence in East Timor, increasing military activity in Afghanistan and Somalia, along with the negative developments in other conflict regions, remind us that we live in a world of evolving threats and challenges.

Modern threats could not have been anticipated when the United Nations was founded in 1945. In fact, the United Nations is challenged, as never before, to deal with ethnic and other inter-State conflicts, weak and failed States, genocide and ethnic cleansing, complex humanitarian disasters and poverty, along with threats of nuclear terrorism, transnational organized crime, infectious diseases and environmental degradation. The major challenges of today cannot be managed by sovereign States acting alone. Hence, the key challenge for all of us is to learn how to collectively manage the complex issues of the world of today and how to ensure the relevance of the United Nations and its leadership in the process.

Slovakia, as a smaller country, is a strong believer in multilateralism. Our present experience as an elected member of the Security Council fully proves that only through effective multilateral action can the world community successfully address modern threats and resolve current conflicts. But — and I underline that "but" — as long as the international community, acting through the United Nations, is unable to take

decisive action to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as in the case of Rwanda or Darfur, as long as the United Nations ignores regressive developments and violations of human rights in some parts of the world, as long as it is unable to fight terrorism more effectively and intervene in situations that do not yet pose a threat to international peace and security but have the potential to swiftly reach that stage, respect for the United Nations will decline in the eyes of our citizens.

Slovakia is, therefore, a strong supporter of United Nations reform. We must continue building on what has been achieved so far, including the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, adoption of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and progress in management reform. We need to focus on reducing tensions between developed and developing countries and on building consensus regarding the future direction of reforms. It is unrealistic to expect that all States will share and promote a single version of United Nations reform. But we have to overcome the zero-sum mentality and continue with the reform debate, with a view to achieving mutual concessions and compromises on specific issues.

We particularly welcome the creation of the Human Rights Council as a step towards realizing the idea of three equal councils embodying three equal pillars of the United Nations. But we ought to be cautious and avoid slipping back into the old habits that made its predecessor so dysfunctional.

Revitalization of the General Assembly, enhancement of the role of the Economic and Social Council and reform of the Security Council remain unfinished business. The reform of the Council should, first and foremost, address the issue of increasing its capacity to act preventively and to take decisive action early enough to prevent conflicts. The Security Council must become more representative, more effective and more transparent.

For its part, Slovakia is ready to engage constructively in meaningful negotiations to achieve those goals. Slovakia, as the co-chair of the ad hoc committee on mandate review in the Security Council, is working hard together with our partners to achieve tangible results in the near future. We hope that visible progress of the process within the Security Council can inspire other United Nations bodies.

Slovakia is concerned about the current situation in the Middle East, in particular in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. We firmly believe that there is no military solution to the Middle East conflict. The only way to achieve a comprehensive and lasting settlement is through peaceful negotiations and full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as the principles defined by the Quartet. Also, only through negotiations and further diplomatic efforts can we fulfil the vision of two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security. New efforts must be undertaken to revive the peace process based on full respect for principles defined by the Quartet in the adopted road map.

Another source of our deep concern is the alarming security and humanitarian situation in Darfur, which continues to deteriorate in spite of numerous efforts of the Security Council, the African Union, the United Nations Secretary-General and the international community at large. We are talking here about a humanitarian disaster of large scale; we, therefore, urgently need to intensify our efforts and break the long-lasting cycle of violence.

In particular, we need to make sure that the Government of National Unity of Sudan finally gives its consent to the planned transition to a United Nations-led operation in Darfur. The concept of "responsibility to protect" adopted at last year's World Summit applies to all Member States and to all Governments. When peaceful means prove inadequate and national authorities are failing to protect their own citizens, the international community has the responsibility to act collectively through the Security Council to prevent another Rwanda or Srebrenica.

As a matter of priority, Slovakia has been closely following developments in the Western Balkans. Our involvement there is based on the principles of transparency and impartiality. Our priority is to strengthen the stability of the region and to support the processes of democratization and integration.

As for the issue of the future of Kosovo, we continue to believe that it is important to seek a settlement through direct talks and dialogue and compromise, from both Belgrade and Pristina. Only a solution that reflects the concerns of all parties involved and provides for the rights of members of all communities, notably the Kosovo Serbs, can ensure

lasting security and stability in the region. The Kosovo issue is truly a sui generis case.

We are also deeply concerned about the nuclear programme of Iran and the proliferation risk it presents to international peace and security. We urge the Iranian authorities to respond positively to the proposed package of incentives and to suspend its uranium enrichment activities. For our part, we are ready to continue the dialogue with Iran in a constructive and open fashion. However, Iran, like any other Member of the United Nations, must comply with Security Council resolutions and with all relevant decisions of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and must fully cooperate with them.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related delivery systems technology continues to threaten global security. This is a serious challenge, and we must face it with all responsibility. It requires joint multilateral efforts and a common and effective response. In May of this year, Secretary-General Kofi Annan told the Conference on Disarmament that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regime, faces "a twin crisis, of compliance and of confidence". With regret, we have to acknowledge that he was absolutely right.

We should work together to overcome deadly links like that between armament and proliferation and to create a progress-friendly atmosphere. We need to restore confidence through compliance with all relevant obligations and commitments. As the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to Council resolution 1540 (2004), Slovakia tries to facilitate the process of the full implementation of all measures to prevent the formation of a nexus between the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. We hope that agreement on the Committee's programme of work will be reached as soon as possible.

We also preside over the Conference on Disarmament, and we are working to intensify efforts to reverse the process of repeated failure during the recent period and undertake constructive dialogue, which would bring about long-expected results. Our aim is to help revitalize the Conference and give new breath to that single multilateral disarmament-negotiating forum of the international community.

In conclusion, I would like to draw attention to an issue which is increasingly important in shaping international programmes for development assistance, the promotion of democracy, security cooperation and post-conflict peacebuilding. I am referring to security-sector reform. Slovakia seeks to stimulate a broad discussion on the role of security-sector reform in the United Nations context, with a view to increasing understanding of the topic and suggesting possible options for the development of a comprehensive and coherent approach. Our wish is to give an impetus to developing a comprehensive policy framework that would guide United Nations security-sector reform programmes and projects in a coherent, consistent and sustainable way.

As Mr. Jan Eliasson stressed in his remarkable speech at the conclusion of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly (see A/60/PV.100), the test of whether we have re-established the United Nations and international cooperation as the best way to manage our global affairs did not occur in the past year, but it will occur in the years ahead.

My wish is that all of us will pass the test and create a United Nations that can live up to the expectations and aspirations of our peoples.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for the statement he has just made.

His Excellency Mr. Robert Fico, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Miyegombo Enkhbold, Prime Minister of Mongolia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Mongolia.

His Excellency Mr. Miyegombo Enkhbold, Prime Minister of Mongolia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Miyegombo Enkhbold, Prime Minister of Mongolia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Enkhbold (Mongolia) (*spoke in Mongolian; English text provided by the delegation*): Considerable progress has been made in implementing the specific set of actions to ensure peace, development and human rights that was agreed upon by more than 150 heads of

State or Government at last year's World Summit. The Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council, the Central Emergency Response Fund, the United Nations Democracy Fund, the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and other achievements speak for themselves.

However, we cannot afford to be complacent about what we have achieved so far. Redoubled efforts ought to be made to ensure that people in every corner of the world feel the benefits of development in their everyday lives. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in his annual report on the work of the Organization, observes that

> "The words of 2005 have yet to have a direct impact on the lives of the poor people they are meant to help. Nor have they produced the implementation breakthroughs required to achieve the Millennium Development Goals". (*A/61/1, para. 27*)

That conclusion is sad, but true.

My delegation therefore welcomes the most timely initiative of the presidency to focus our attention at this session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the global partnership for development. The global partnership for development was framed as Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 8 and thus cannot be divorced from other development goals and objectives.

In our view, the global partnership for development means a global compact between developed and developing States. It is the responsibility of developing countries to formulate and implement sound policies to ensure their sustainable economic and social development and, to that end, to mobilize domestic resources. For the developed countries, it entails an obligation to support such efforts through the provision of development financing, including official development assistance (ODA), in a timely and sufficient manner and to ensure increased market access for developing countries. Mongolia, for one, takes its responsibilities seriously and is committed to its development objectives.

Allow me to describe the policies and specific actions taken by my country to implement the MDGs, as well as my views on the need to build partnerships to achieve them. First, Mongolia attaches particular importance to its implementation of the MDGs. Our first progress report was discussed at both the Cabinet and parliamentary levels, resulting in parliament's adoption in April last year of a resolution institutionalizing Mongolia's MDGs. Thus, the Goals have been mainstreamed into the guidelines for the country's economic and social development, and the funds necessary to meet the individual goals are reflected in the annual State budget.

Secondly, to honour its commitment made in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1), Mongolia is developing an MDG-based comprehensive development strategy and plans to submit the first draft to parliament during its autumn session. The active participation of political parties, civil society and the private sector in that undertaking will ensure the sustainable implementation of the national development strategy over the years.

Thirdly, the adoption of an additional, ninth, Millennium Development Goal (MDG) — on the promotion of human rights, fostering democratic governance and combating corruption — was an innovative step that reflected the indissoluble link between development, good governance, human rights and democracy in our national policy. Within the framework of working towards meeting that goal, the parliament recently passed a new law against corruption, thereby creating a legal environment to remove the shackles that that phenomenon imposes on development. In accordance with the new law, a new anti-corruption body is to be set up to deal with raising public awareness and to address ways to prevent and uncover corruption, investigate cases of corruption and audit the financial and income declarations of public officials.

Fourthly, the Government of National Unity, which was formed early this year, is undertaking a host of quick-impact projects on poverty reduction and income-generation in the implementation of its MDGs, in order that the benefits of the social security policy can reach various strata of the population. Allow me to cite a few examples.

Salaries in the public sector have been raised by 33 per cent, and the minimum wage by 30 percent. A monthly allowance is being provided to every one of the nearly 1 million children in Mongolia, which accounts for almost half of the entire population. Married couples and new-born children are provided financial support on a one-time basis. Mothers with

five or more children and older persons have seen considerable increases in their monthly allowances and pensions. In collaboration with the private sector, this academic year my Government introduced a free school-meal programme for elementary school children. The launching of all those quick-impact initiatives will contribute to our efforts to reduce poverty and achieve the MDGs.

Fifthly, on the policy level, my Government is placing particular emphasis on the human development dimension of the MDGs, including in such areas as education and health. For example, a programme on the theme of "A healthy Mongolian", which is to be implemented between 2006 and 2008, will provide for medical check-ups and diagnosis and carry out surveys of the prevalent illnesses among the population over 15 years of age. The programme will also include preventive measures and treatment. Furthermore, the implementation of our education master plan for the period 2006-2015, will improve access to education and the quality and competitiveness of our national education system, ultimately advancing the level of human development. The plan will also contribute to the goal of increasing employment by means of developing human resources in a way that corresponds to the economic structure of the country and meets the demands of the labour market.

In addition, on the initiative of my Government, amendments have been made to the tax code that aim at easing the overall tax burden, thereby creating a favourable business environment, promoting greater economic growth and generating new jobs.

Although Mongolia is poised to achieve most of its MDGs by 2015 in the areas of education, gender, child and maternal health and combating various diseases, the goals of halving poverty and ensuring environmental sustainability continue to be a source of concern. It goes without saying that, like many other developing countries, Mongolia will not be able to achieve those goals on its own. Genuine partnership and effective cooperation between all stakeholders — including bilateral and multilateral donors, international financial organizations and the private sector — is therefore required in order to substantially reduce poverty and promote development in the developing world.

The quality of aid should also be improved through the tailoring of foreign grants and loans to the implementation needs of the MDGs and MDG-based national development strategies. That improvement should also be achieved by providing more predictable and multi-year aid flows, addressing weaknesses in institutional capacity and harmonizing the distribution of aid with the priorities of recipient countries, in accordance with the principles set out in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Mongolia is a landlocked developing country dependent on a few export commodities. We are therefore highly susceptible to fluctuations in the world's commodity and energy markets. I believe that the establishment of commodity-price stabilization mechanisms and anti-shock facilities could make a tangible contribution to poverty reduction measures in low-income commodity-dependent countries. At the same time, trade and investment are among the driving forces of development. The World Trade Organization Doha Development Round of negotiations should therefore be revived, with a view to creating a more favourable and just trade regime that involves market access and trade and industrial capacity-building assistance for developing countries, particularly for economically vulnerable States. For its part, Mongolia is preparing to host a conference of trade ministers of landlocked developing countries in 2007.

I should also like to urge the international community to focus its attention on the declaration adopted at the first-ever Meeting of the Heads of State or Government of Landlocked Developing Countries held last week in Havana. That document reflects the common position of landlocked LDCs. Its full implementation will be instrumental in assisting landlocked LDCs, including Mongolia, as they carry out their development and poverty reduction efforts.

Democracy plays an important role in bringing about peace and development. Although democracy is rooted in the soil of individual societies, it has to be supported through international cooperation. In its capacity as Chair of the fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, Mongolia has endeavoured to promote democratic values at the international level. We have undertaken a set of concrete measures as follow-up to the fifth Conference, including the development of nationally owned democratic-governance indicators, a country information note and a national plan of action to consolidate democracy. We have also introduced a tripartite structure in the Conference to include

Governments, parliaments and civil society. We have also set up a friends-of-the-chair group and are fully utilizing the follow-up mechanism in New York. It is gratifying to note that the international follow-up conference to the fifth International Conference, which was held in Ulaanbaátar last June, highly commended the work done over the last three years. My country is prepared to report on its activities and to share its accomplishments and lessons learned with the greater membership of the movement during the sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which is to be held next month in Doha, Qatar.

This year marks the 800th anniversary of the establishment of the great Mongol State — a remarkable date for my country. The General Assembly, in resolution 60/16, adopted last year, invited Member States, international organizations and academia to take an active part in the commemorative events associated with the anniversary. I wish to express our great appreciation to all persons — including people of Mongol ethnicity, academics and guests from various countries and organizations — for their active participation in the many international conferences organized in the spirit of that resolution. Those meetings included the international conference on traditions of Mongolian statehood, the ninth international forum of Mongolists, the convention of world Mongolians and the international workshop on the traditions of nomads. I am also happy to acknowledge that more than 300 high-level guests representing more than 30 States and Governments attended our national day ceremony — Naadam — which was the main commemorative event of the year.

The year-round celebration of activities and events are of particular importance, as they help us modern-day Mongols heirs to statehood preserve and develop nomadic culture and traditions and to re-introduce to the world our rich history and culture, along with the progress and challenges facing us today.

The sixty-first session has special meaning for us, as it coincides with the 45th anniversary of Mongolia's membership in the world Organization. Our admission to the United Nations as a full-fledged Member, on 27 October 1961, was a historically important event for the people of Mongolia. Over the years, our cooperation with the United Nations has expanded in terms of both content and scope. The Organization's support and assistance have been instrumental in helping Mongolia meet its development goals, build capacity and consolidate democracy. For its part, Mongolia has all along supported the United Nations. We have also striven to participate actively in its activities and to make our contribution to the efforts of the international community to find solutions to the pressing issues facing the world.

This autumn, we are about to select the next Secretary-General of the United Nations. Beginning in 2007, that person will represent the international community on the world stage. The next Secretary-General must be someone who will effectively follow through with the bold initiatives and reform efforts carried out by the current Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in the areas of peace, development and human rights. That person must also be committed to making the world a better place, and possess strong managerial skills, vision and experience. In short, he or she must be a genuine leader. I am convinced that such a person can, and should, come from Asia, which is home to half of the world's population.

Mongolia is prepared to participate actively in the work of the United Nations and of other multilateral organizations and processes. We reaffirm our commitment to the world Organization as a central coordinating instrument of the common efforts of the world's nations to maintain peace and promote development.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Mongolia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Miyegombo Enkhbold, Prime Minister of Mongolia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Solomon Ekuma Berewa, Vice-President of the Republic of Sierra Leone

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Solomon Ekuma Berewa, Vice-President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Solomon Ekuma Berewa, Vice-President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Berewa (Sierra Leone): The delegation of the Republic of Sierra Leone would like to congratulate the President on her assumption of the responsibility for directing the work of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. It is our pleasure to reaffirm our confidence in her ability to run the Assembly, as well as to pledge our unflinching support and cooperation during her tenure.

Let me also take this opportunity to pay special tribute to her predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his commitment and diplomatic skill, which enabled him effectively to manage the Assembly and help the reform process to achieve some major successes during his presidency.

A year ago, the heads of Member States of the United Nations declared their commitment to the reform of the Organization, in order to reflect its experience in the course of 60 years of existence and its ever-expanding role within the context of the realities of the current world order. The process has, understandably, been painfully slow, because of the multiplicity of competing national interests. While my delegation appreciates the progress made so far, particularly in the form of the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, we are unhappy about the sluggish pace of Security Council reform, a matter that is close to the heart of Africa.

As a Member State deeply committed to the African position on United Nations reform, my delegation would like to urge the reform of the Security Council to move faster so that our continent can take its rightful place in the United Nations organ that is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. Obviously, the Security Council can never be the just, democratic and representative body that it should be if Africa, with 53 Member States in the United Nations, does not have permanent representation proportional to its size.

As a least developed country (LDC) emerging from a devastating conflict, we are also concerned that development has not been treated with the prominence and urgency it deserves in the reform process, considering its cause-and-effect relationship with conflict and human rights. That relationship was succinctly recognized in one of the outcomes of last year's High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly, which stated that our nations and peoples could not enjoy development without security, nor would they enjoy security in the absence of development, and they would not enjoy either without respect for human rights. The need, therefore, to support development programmes — including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development — as the foundation for peace and security cannot be overemphasized.

We are particularly happy about the establishment of the Human Rights Council, whose operation, we hope, will be above the weaknesses that demoralized the former Human Rights Commission. We call on all Member States, in particular the Council's founding members, to set and maintain standards that will justify the optimism that the new Council will refrain from practices that discredited the Human Rights Commission.

Of particular interest to us as a post-conflict country, however, is the Peacebuilding Commission, whose mandate is to support the recovery of societies emerging from conflict. We thank the Commission for choosing Sierra Leone as one of two countries where it will begin operation. We assure the Commission of our fullest support and cooperation. As it will soon discover, if it has not yet done so, we have already embarked on the path of peacebuilding and consolidation, having carefully formulated policies and activities aimed at achieving lasting peace, security and stability, which are the critical requirements for meaningful development.

We have developed a poverty reduction strategy paper that has attracted support from a number of donor agencies and friendly countries. We have produced a peace-consolidation strategy paper, which is to be presented to the Peacebuilding Commission for support in addressing some of the challenges facing our country in the areas of governance and security prior to the forthcoming presidential and parliamentary elections in 2007.

For the Peacebuilding Commission to be able to work in Sierra Leone on the basis of concrete, first-hand information, we have extended an invitation to the Commission to visit Sierra Leone. We are looking forward to receiving the Commission in Sierra Leone.

The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone completed its peacekeeping mandate and closed down at the end of 2005. But the United Nations did not

leave behind a complete vacuum, it left the United Nations Integrated Office for Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) to support our post-conflict recovery programme. We thank the United Nations for its continued support and assure the Organization that its contribution will not be in vain. We have no doubt that the combined efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission, UNIOSIL and the Government will achieve the desired objective of peace, security and development in the country.

The people of Sierra Leone are proud of their role in resolving their own conflict, as well as of their successes in the democratic process. We had a highly successful democratic election in 2002, barely five months after the end of the conflict. That was followed by local government elections as part of a governance decentralization process. Our second post-conflict presidential and parliamentary elections, which will mark a transition in leadership, are scheduled to be held around this time next year. Sierra Leone cannot afford having that watershed election go wrong, but we need assistance to carry it out properly. I therefore appeal to the United Nations, the European Union, other members of the international community and our bilateral friends to continue to help us, both financially and technically, to make the elections another milestone achievement in Sierra Leone's peace and democracy processes.

The people of Sierra Leone are conscious of the fact that the peace they now enjoy is a product of the support of, and cooperation with, the United Nations and the international community. At this stage in our history, the country is faced with three sets of challenges as a nation: we must rectify the accumulated errors of past policies; we must repair the damage and heal the scars left by the conflict; and we must chart an appropriate path for the development of our small country in the twenty-first century. We have the natural resources to be able to do that. With time, our human resources will also measure up. Above all, at this time we need the sustained engagement of international partners. That is why we are seeking to expand and reinforce our partnerships with the external world — partnerships that can support us now, and remain with us as we pursue a longer-term agenda for sustainable development.

Finally, we are in a conflict-ridden region and the peace in Sierra Leone cannot be sustained in isolation. We therefore urge the United Nations to continue its efforts to pursue durable peace in the West African subregion.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Sierra Leone for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Solomon Ekuma Berewa, Vice-President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ban Ki-moon (Republic of Korea): Let me begin by congratulating the presidency on the success of the High-level Meeting on the least developed countries, earlier in the week. I had the honour of participating in the Meeting, which heralded a very productive year for the Assembly under the astute leadership of Her Excellency Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, President of the General Assembly, and her Bureau.

I would like to express my deepest thanks and admiration to His Excellency Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his unparalleled dedication and contribution to world peace and prosperity through his dedicated service to our global Organization.

The United Nations was created, first and foremost, to forestall another world war. Not only has it achieved that cardinal goal despite four decades of cold war, but it has also offered States multiple means of resolving their differences, short of war. However, we cannot be sanguine about future trends. If the primary task of the United Nations in the twentieth century was to curb inter-State conflict, its core mandate in the new century must be to strengthen States and to preserve the inter-State system in the face of new challenges.

Some assert that the United Nations is poorly equipped to deal with new threats, such as those posed by non-State actors seeking to undermine the international order. The Charter was crafted to give Member States ample flexibility in adapting the United Nations machinery to respond to novel threats in a changing world. But our tools need sharpening.

Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the United Nations has played an increasingly

indispensable role in the international community's counter-terrorism efforts. Still, agreement on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism remains elusive. But we must continue to try. In the meantime, the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), adopted at the end of the sixtieth session of the Assembly, will guide our collective efforts to free the world from the scourge of terrorism.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction poses an equally urgent and unacceptable threat to the peace and security of the world. We cannot permit the credibility of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, built around the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to be undermined by evasion and concealment concerning safeguards obligations. We should redouble our efforts to get more countries to sign and ratify International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) additional protocols. An early start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) should also be supported.

Meanwhile, we must seek peaceful solutions to the outstanding challenges to the system, including the Iranian nuclear issue that is before the Security Council. It is not too late to work towards a negotiated solution on that issue with its far-reaching implications. I would call for creative, constructive thinking on the part of all parties concerned, so as to resolve the issue within the framework of the NPT regime.

As for the situation on the Korean peninsula, the nuclear and missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea constitute a serious challenge to the non-proliferation regime, as well as to regional security. My Government fully supports Security Council resolution 1695 (2006). We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from any action that might aggravate the situation, and to return to the Six-Party Talks without preconditions, for a diplomatic resolution of the matter.

In that regard, during the summit meeting held last week in Washington, D.C., President Roh Moo-hyun and President Bush agreed to work with other nations of the Six-Party Talks to develop a common and comprehensive approach to energize the stalled talks. I strongly hope that those efforts will bear fruit and that we can work to realize the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula as envisaged in the Joint Statement adopted on 19 September 2005.

Although not mentioned in the Charter, peacekeeping has become a defining feature of the post-cold-war era, as well as the largest, most expensive and most visible operational activity of the United Nations. The surge in calls for the services of the Blue Helmets attests to the Organization's continuing, even growing, relevance.

The expanded United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in southern Lebanon is a challenging case in point. To succeed, UNIFIL must have the active support of all Member States, backed by timely humanitarian and economic assistance. To that end, my Government has been providing substantial humanitarian assistance to the afflicted population.

The undiminished human suffering in Palestine remains another source of deep concern. We urge the early revival of the stalled peace process.

The violence and the loss of innocent lives in Iraq concern us enormously as well. We trust that Iraq will become a stable and prosperous democracy under the leadership of its new Government. As a friend of Iraq, my Government supports its efforts at national reconstruction and welcomes the recent launch of the International Compact with Iraq to speed the process.

In Africa, stability and democracy are gaining ground, step by step, in Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The security and humanitarian crisis in Darfur, however, remains acute. The Secretary-General's strong personal engagement has been critical in sustaining international attention and the flow of assistance to the beleaguered people of Darfur. Now, the smooth transition of the African Union Mission in the Sudan to the United Nations Mission in the Sudan must be accomplished in accordance with Security Council resolution 1706 (2006).

The performance of the United Nations cannot be measured by the creation of new machinery, any more than by the adoption of resolutions. As the Secretary-General has wisely reminded us, what matters is whether and how the United Nations makes a difference in the lives of people and in the conduct of States and non-State actors over time.

Two new intergovernmental bodies, the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, seek to make just such a difference. Their success, however, is far from assured. A great deal is at stake. Will the new Human Rights Council usher in an era of renewed cooperation and solidarity in the work of the United Nations on human rights? Will the universal periodic review succeed in offering all States a candid and constructive assessment of ways to enhance their human rights practices?

Together, we can make the Council the pre-eminent global forum for the advancement of human rights around the world. Divided, we will lose a historic opportunity. The protection of human rights is not a matter of choice. It is the solemn duty of all responsible members of the international community. Without respect for human rights — in particular for the most vulnerable members of society — peace and development have little meaning.

The successful conclusion of the negotiations on a convention on the rights of persons with disabilities speaks to the essential humanity of the United Nations, which is its most precious asset. The Republic of Korea is fully committed to the principle of all human rights for all. We deeply empathize with the suffering in those areas of the world where human rights are given little more than lip service.

In particular, we fully share the international community's concern over the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to heed those concerns and to meet the call for dialogue on human rights.

The United Nations greeted the twenty-first century with a solemn promise to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Progress has been made, but it has been far too uneven from country to country and from region to region. Those countries in Africa that lack the minimum resources for development require the focused attention and assistance of the international community. Key goals, such as the eradication of extreme poverty and curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, are in danger of slipping out of reach if we do not act quickly and decisively.

Meeting the MDGs by 2015 is a tall order, but we should never forget that, for the neediest members of humankind, the United Nations may be the only beacon of hope for a better life. The credibility of the United Nations largely depends upon its ability to accomplish its mission as regards the MDGs. While developing countries should take primary responsibility and ownership for their own development, we must honour our commitments and redouble our efforts to realize effective global partnerships for development.

The target established at the 2005 World Summit of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for development assistance forms the cornerstone of our strong commitment to achieving the MDGs. Innovative sources of financing, such as the air-ticket solidarity fund, need to be further explored. New sources of financing should not, however, be a substitute for existing official development assistance (ODA). As part of its commitment to doubling overall ODA by 2009, this year my Government launched Korea's Initiative for Africa's Development. Under that initiative, we will substantially increase our development assistance to Africa.

The key lessons to be drawn from the Korean experience over the decades are that education is key to development, and that women and girls are the most effective agents for change and social progress. Gender mainstreaming must be made a central pillar of policy strategy, in particular with regard to attaining the MDGs in such areas as eliminating poverty and combating HIV/AIDS. Lasting social change cannot be realized until women are fully incorporated into the process.

The urgency, complexity and scope of the three pillars of the work of the United Nations — peace and security, development and human rights — demand the highest standards of efficient, effective and accountable management. The highly decentralized nature of the United Nations system puts a premium on coherence and coordination. We must streamline the United Nations machinery, reorganize priorities and minimize redundancy. The High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence may offer some fresh ideas in that regard.

A number of valuable ideas for reforming United Nations management practices were contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/60/692) entitled "Investing in the United Nations". Some of those proposals have already been adopted by the General Assembly, while others await further consideration during this session.

The Secretary-General's comments on the evolving nature of the human resource needs of the United Nations were especially apt in the light of the accelerating demands for field staff. The General Assembly should give positive consideration to steps to make the Secretariat more mobile, integrated and multi-skilled. The United Nations needs to be able to deploy the best people where they are needed and when they are needed, to ensure that managers have the requisite expertise and experience to oversee highly dynamic and professional operations under often trying conditions.

Improving the accountability and oversight of the Secretariat while building upon the measures already taken over the past year remains a priority. The early launch of an independent audit advisory committee that is genuinely independent and professional, along with steps to ensure management accountability, would be instrumental in that regard.

The United Nations procurement system requires strengthened internal controls and transparent management to match the growing dimensions of its work.

As Member States and stakeholders in this vital Organization, we should address mandate review as a historic opportunity to streamline, focus and strengthen our collective efforts.

This unique world body was forged by men and women of conscience, courage and determination. Their genius was to understand that we need the United Nations not because we always agree but because frequently we do not. The United Nations remains no more and no less than what we make of it. The United Nations journey is never easy, but it is always well worth taking. We have come a very long way, but the road still stretches out endlessly before us. I have every confidence that, with the founding principles and purposes as our guideposts, and empowered by renewed faith and commitment, we can together go very far and fast in the challenging and exciting times to come.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (spoke in Russian): Traditionally, the General Assembly session provides an opportunity to conduct a review of the current situation in the world, identify major international issues and determine the role that the United Nations could play in resolving them.

I believe that we have every reason to conclude that there is a prevailing trend of growing awareness of the need to strengthen the collective foundations of international politics, as well as of the fact that there is no alternative to tackling problems through multilateral diplomacy. That trend is based on objective facts, for it reflects the realities of an emerging multipolar architecture of international relations. It is logical, because answers to global challenges and threats can only be found collectively. Finally, it is a manifestation of historical continuity, because we are revisiting the same objective as the founding fathers of the United Nations were determined to pursue by enshrining in the Charter the principles for a system of collective security.

It is precisely such an approach, firmly grounded in international law, that can ensure the world's sustainable development in this era of globalization. That requires a strengthened central role for the universal Organization in every area of international life.

We must of course continue to adapt the mechanisms and methods of the United Nations to the new environment. Much has been done as follow-up to the decisions of the 2005 World Summit: The Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council have been established, and the reform process has been extended to management.

It is important that all our further work be based upon the fundamental principle of the universality of the United Nations. Patterns contrary to the Charter of the United Nations that exclude individual States or groups of States from participating meaningfully in the activities of the Organization or that introduce a single system of values into the work of the Secretariat are unsustainable. Let us not forget that the United Nations belongs to us all. Moreover, administrative reform should not lead to the bureaucracy taking over the management of the Organization, thereby jeopardizing the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations.

A trend towards collective action has also spread beyond the structures of the United Nations. During Russia's presidency of the Group of Eight (G-8), there was greater interaction between the G-8 and other leading countries and international organizations. Over

the past 12 months our dialogue partners have actively contributed to Saint Petersburg summit documents on every main agenda item, including global energy security, education and controlling infectious diseases.

A new and genuinely collaborative type of interaction between the G-8 and Africa is now emerging in this era of globalization, as the needs of the continent are reflected in the mainstream of world development rather than being viewed as issues divorced from overall trends.

The G-8 does not have a monopoly over the decisions taken at Saint Petersburg. All States are invited to participate in their implementation.

Regional organizations and cooperation and coordination between those organizations and the United Nations have also strengthened in maintaining international peace and security. Issues pertaining to that were discussed yesterday at the special ministerial meeting of the Security Council (see S/PV.5529). Once again, we are dealing here with an important dimension of collective action by the international community.

The Commonwealth of Independent States has made a significant contribution to such interaction. To address common problems, specific actions have been taken within the Commonwealth area, primarily within the Eurasian Economic Community and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Further substantive and resolute efforts are being made in the context of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which developed and launched and initiative to establish a partnership network for multilateral organizations in the Asia-Pacific region. Development patterns in that region will largely determine the future contours of our planet.

Multilateral institutions in Latin America have also become stronger, and the development of the African Union is gaining momentum.

At their recent Summit in Havana, heads of State of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement expressed their support for a collective search — within the context of the central role of the United Nations — for agreed solutions to problems confronting the world community.

Europe, of course, is not outside the common trend towards collective examination and resolution of common problems. In that connection, we also see growing awareness of the fact that security and prosperity are indivisible. We expect NATO to transform itself from a defence alliance into something more contemporary that would be in line with principles of transparency and collective response and based upon a universal legal foundation.

We have been watching with keen interest the emerging foreign policy and security mechanisms of the European Union. Russia is prepared to cooperate with multilateral structures in the Euro-Atlantic space and other regions of the world. In fact, we already have effective common mechanisms with many of them.

Collective efforts are also needed to further develop international law, primarily within the context of countering new threats. The United Nations Global Counter-terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), which was recently adopted by consensus, is an important contribution in terms of strengthening the legal basis for the anti-terrorist coalition and ensuring a comprehensive approach to counter-terrorism. It is not only about countering all terrorist manifestations and ideologies, it is also about eliminating the problems that give rise to terrorism. The next step will be to agree upon a comprehensive anti-terrorism convention.

It is necessary to secure the achievements that have been made by taking practical steps. In the course of Russia's presidency of the G-8, the Second Ministerial Conference on Drug Trafficking Routes From Afghanistan was held, where additional measures were approved aimed at mobilizing the international community to counter the terrorism-related drug threat originating from Afghanistan. Another international meeting will be held in Moscow next November to focus on developing modalities for government-business partnerships in countering terrorism.

What is needed today are more proactive measures to prevent lethal weapons from falling into the hands of non-State actors, as well as the consistent implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and other counter-terrorism resolutions of the Council. The Russia-United States global initiative to combat nuclear terrorism, which was launched at Saint Petersburg by Presidents Vladimir V. Putin and George W. Bush last July, should be an important tool in preventing a linkage between weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. That initiative invites interested States to act collectively.

The ever-growing demand for the unique peacekeeping capabilities of the United Nations also calls for a collective effort. Not all of those capabilities

have been utilized to the fullest. Utilizing the capabilities of the Military Staff Committee, as well as those of regional organizations, on the basis of the relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter would be helpful.

It is encouraging to see a more active role being played by Africans themselves in peacemaking operations in Africa — an undertaking spearheaded by the African Union and supported by the United Nations.

In a number of crisis situations conditions are gradually emerging for a transition to post-conflict reconstruction. It is our hope that the Declaration on Cooperation and Future Action in Stabilization and Reconstruction adopted at the Saint Petersburg G-8 Summit will help us complement the efforts of the United Nations and regional organizations at this critically important period of transition to peacebuilding.

A comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict remains a central task for the world community. Many of today's threats have come together in that region, and the key to resolving them is most often to be found there. In that connection, I should first like to mention the truly global challenge posed by the need to prevent a schism between civilizations.

We welcome the emerging prospects for a national agreement in the Palestinian territories, as well as for the resumption of the Palestinian-Israeli talks. It is important to continue to encourage the parties to meet their respective obligations, with the clear understanding that any progress towards the objectives set out by the international community will inevitably be gradual and that any attempt to act in an all-or-nothing spirit will be counterproductive and could once again plunge the region into confrontation.

The recent war in Lebanon demonstrated the great fragility of the situation in the Middle East and the acute need for a comprehensive approach along all tracks. That presupposes the involvement of all countries and parties. Without their participation it will be impossible to reach any viable negotiated solution. It is also clear that the road to comprehensive peace will not be an easy one, but now is the time. The initiative of the League of Arab States to convene an international conference should contribute to finding the proper framework for that undertaking. The Quartet of international mediators should also make a key contribution to the process.

A breakthrough on a Middle East settlement could provide the positive momentum so wanting in the region. It could also facilitate the solution of other burning problems in the region and in neighbouring countries. That is particularly true as regards efforts aimed at stabilizing the situation in Iraq, where attempts to contain wanton violence and chaos have thus far proved unsuccessful. Dozens of people, mainly civilians, continue to die in Iraq every day. Five officials of the Russian embassy in Baghdad have also fallen victim to that barbarous massacre. A resolution in Iraq will be possible only through concerted efforts. That requires the involvement in the political process of all major Iraqi interests and the implementation of the plans of that country's Government to reach genuine national accord, with the concerted support of the international community, including all of Iraq's neighbours.

We are, unfortunately, now witnessing growing significance of the use of force in world affairs; that undermines non-proliferation regimes. The feeling of a lack of predictability and stability in the area of security is becoming ever more pronounced. Against that background, the growing interest of many States in nuclear energy may give rise to concerns, given the trend towards the global proliferation of sensitive technologies.

Apart from current resolute steps to find negotiated solutions to individual problems — such as the Iranian nuclear programme and the problem of the Korean peninsula — there is a need for an urgent effort by the entire international community to systematically strengthen non-proliferation regimes on a generally acceptable basis, while ensuring that the benefits of peaceful atomic energy are legitimately accessible to all States.

President Vladimir V. Putin's initiative to establish multilateral centres for nuclear fuel-cycle services, along with similar ideas proposed by the leadership of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and proposals put forth by United States President George W. Bush, have found support among G-8 leaders. We are confident that the development and practical implementation of such approaches — in cooperation with all countries with an interest in modern and safe nuclear energy — will make it

possible to resolve non-proliferation issues in a non-confrontational manner.

As in other areas, the obsession with sanctions — applied without calculating their consequences — might produce unpredictable results. It is absolutely necessary to eliminate the loopholes in the non-proliferation regimes, but that should be done through clear and non-discriminatory approaches, without creating grounds for suspicion regarding the existence of some hidden agenda.

Stagnation in the international disarmament process does not help to resolve non-proliferation problems. Here again, we need concerted action, for this is a matter of collective security.

In the area of strategic arms, the United States-Russian agreements play an enormously important role. Their significance goes far beyond the framework of bilateral relations, considering that virtually all members of the international community benefit from strategic stability. We support the consistent development of the United States-Russian bilateral disarmament process, as was stated by our Presidents in Saint Petersburg in July.

Closely related to that are issues related to anti-ballistic missiles, in particular within the context of the existing plans of the United States. In that context, there is a need for complete transparency and for an analysis of the consequences for strategic stability.

The situation surrounding the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe continues to cause grave concern. The old Treaty, based on the realities of confrontation between military blocs, has lost its relevance, while NATO is blocking the entry into force of the Agreement on its adaptation.

At the same time, reconfiguration of the military architecture on the European continent is under way. At its heart is an expanding military alliance. Such virtual arms control becomes meaningless as it turns into a one-way street.

It is also necessary to revitalize multilateral disarmament approaches. That agenda should include the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, non-deployment of weapons in outer space, conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty and ensuring information security. Nuclear-weapon-free zones play an important role, and we welcome the creation of such a zone in Central Asia.

The overall task is to reinvigorate the efforts of the international community in the area of disarmament and arms control, within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament and other relevant United Nations bodies.

The 2005 World Summit unanimously reaffirmed that peace, security and development are inseparable. With that in mind, we are prepared to engage in collective discussions and support further joint pragmatic steps with a view to improving the efficiency of the social and economic activities of the entire United Nations system.

The Russian Federation realizes its responsibility as one of the fastest growing economies of the world, and is devoting increasing attention to development assistance. Thus far, Russia has written off or has undertaken to write off $11.3 billion of the debt of African countries, including more than $2.2 billion within the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. New steps are planned in that area. Russia now ranks third in absolute figures of debt relief and first in terms of the ratio of debt relief to gross domestic product. We have also increased our contributions to other international development assistance mechanisms, including through United Nations institutions and funds and the Bretton Woods institutions.

Today, I cannot fail to express my sincere appreciation and praise to the Secretary-General Kofi Annan. For many years, during the most difficult times for world politics, he has carried out his duties with dignity. Thanks largely to the efforts of Kofi Annan and to his ability to take the lead while remaining a realist in the face of severe challenges, we have managed to make progress in strengthening the United Nations.

Today the United Nations is relevant as never before. We do not have to create it anew. In the course of reforming the United Nations in accordance with the dictates of the time, it is incumbent upon us all to reaffirm by action our commitment to the world Organization, which draws its strength from our trust in it and in its unique legitimacy. Without the United Nations and its Charter to rely upon, it would prove impossible to ensure a more reliable and democratic system of collective security that would respond to the dictates of our time.

The Acting President: It gives me particular pleasure to give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Bernard Rudolf Bot, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

Mr. Bot (Netherlands): Five years after the destruction of the Twin Towers and just a few days after the commemoration of that terrible tragedy, I would like to extend my deepest sympathy to the people of this great city, which serves as mankind's meeting point.

Last year, I stressed our collective responsibility to protect tolerance from intolerance. I spoke of freedom of expression and freedom of religion. Today I should like to revisit that theme. But, in addition, I will discuss the relationship between fighting terrorism and respecting human rights, the search for peace in the Middle East and reform of the United Nations. Moreover, I will renew my call for intensified dialogue. Only dialogue at all levels of society leads to more knowledge about one another — and often to more mutual understanding.

The threat of terrorism has not subsided. To fully understand the nature of the challenge we face, we have to ask ourselves what terrorists are aiming for. They aspire to undermine a society based on democracy, fundamental freedoms, human rights and the quest for progress. In their view, there is no place for the principles and tenets of our free society. Instead, they try by means of terror and violence to impose their views of the world on others.

As to the means used by terrorists, there can be no doubt that large-scale and systematic terrorist acts qualify as crimes against humanity under international law. While civilized societies uphold international legal and moral standards in defending themselves, terrorists completely reject the central principles of international law. Our campaign against this threat must be fought with great determination by all of us. Indiscriminate violence must be countered by the collective will to defend our values, in order to protect our civilization and human dignity.

In order for this campaign to be successful in the long run, we must also place great emphasis on development, fair trade and dialogue. Unlike those who have prospects for a better life through access to education and jobs, people without prospects and without a voice are more easily lured by the siren call of hatred. To deal with that issue is one of the core missions of the United Nations. We — all nations of the United Nations — have a collective responsibility to give people a future and a voice so that they can improve their lives.

Extremists cleverly seek to exploit the freedom of open societies with the aim of destroying that very freedom. This confronts us with a dilemma: do we close our societies in self-defence, thus becoming more like the evil we face, or do we remain open societies and accept a certain degree of vulnerability? Anti-terrorism measures can be effective only if adopted within the context of the human rights commitments we have undertaken. Ultimately, our defence should not come at the expense of the very values upon which our societies are founded. Our citizens must be able to distinguish between the societies in which they lead productive lives and the terrorist movements for which human life has little value. I am happy with the agreement we reached on the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288). But now, we must see to its implementation. It is also in our collective interest to conclude a terrorism convention as well.

The need for interfaith and intercultural dialogue is as great as ever. During and after the so-called cartoon crisis, I engaged in discussions with colleagues and the media in Asia and the Middle East. We talked about freedom of expression and freedom of religion, and I discovered that such personal efforts are crucial in finding common ground. One of the initiatives we have taken is to host the annual Asia-Europe Meeting conference on interfaith dialogue in Amsterdam in 2008.

For any interfaith dialogue to be meaningful, respect for diversity is a precondition. In our view, all of the world's nationalities, religions and beliefs should live side by side, united by a tradition of pluralism, democracy and the rule of law. According to international instruments to which we all subscribe, respect for diversity means, for example, freedom of religion and belief. That includes the freedom to adhere to any religion, or to no religion at all. In my country — and in many others as well — an individual is free to be a Christian, Muslim, Jew or Hindu or to adhere to any other belief. This philosophy includes the right to change one's belief, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states.

We believe that the separation of Church and State and the independence of the courts are the best guarantees that nobody has the power to impose his or her beliefs on others. Freedom of religion and freedom of expression are two sides of the same coin. Does this mean that people can say whatever they want? No. The right to free speech does not entitle a person to insult others. But restrictions on the freedom of expression must never go further than what is necessary within a democratic society. In individual cases where freedom of expression conflicts with legitimate restrictions, it is up to the courts, not the Government, to decide which principle should prevail.

Peace in the Middle East would reinforce a global spirit of dialogue. We have reason to be optimistic. Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) ended hostilities between Hizbollah and Israel, unfortunately only after many innocent civilians had lost their lives. I commend the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts to promote the resolution's effective implementation.

The renewed United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is an important symbol of hope. Peacekeepers of different religious and cultural backgrounds are working together under the sky-blue banner of the United Nations, as they have been doing in the Great Lakes region in Africa and will hopefully soon be doing in Darfur, the Sudan. I am proud of the fact that several States members of the European Union, together with Turkey, China and Indonesia, provide the backbone of UNIFIL. The Netherlands is actively considering contributing to UNIFIL's maritime component. Practical implementation will depend on the cooperation of all parties and countries in the region, and beyond, including Syria and Iran. I call upon them to act in accordance with Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

Regional peace also requires resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Israeli-Syrian dispute. I call upon all parties involved to seize the political momentum created by Council resolution 1701 (2006) and engage in serious dialogue. The Quartet could, at the request of the Security Council, outline a comprehensive Middle East settlement.

In this world, we need the United Nations to manage change, rather than lag behind. We need to renew and reinvigorate the United Nations. Last year's Summit was devoted to that very task. We have made substantial progress since then, but more needs to be done. My country's vision of an effective United Nations includes less fragmentation, more concentration and more synergy. We need a United Nations that cuts red tape, rather than one that creates more bureaucracy. For example, in an interdependent world, it makes no sense to have 38 different United Nations humanitarian and development agencies. That is why we have suggested one office, one programme, one representative and one financial mechanism at the country level.

My vision of the United Nations encompasses a Peacebuilding Commission that focuses on critical peacebuilding needs and a Human Rights Council that is the single most authoritative voice on human rights. It is a United Nations led by a Secretary-General with greater authority to determine the optimal use of human and other resources than is the case at present.

As an active Member of the United Nations, the Netherlands will continue to contribute to the best of its ability to turn this vision into reality. The Netherlands does not just preach; it delivers. For more than 60 years, ever since the foundation of the United Nations, we have provided means, ideas and people. And, of course, we remain committed to its cause.

Security Council reform is a difficult part of the overall United Nations reform agenda. A pragmatic approach would be to opt for a temporary solution that could be modified after, say, 10 years. The world is dynamic and the Security Council's composition should reflect this. The geopolitical realities of today might not necessarily be the geopolitical realities of tomorrow.

We should focus on the longer-term gains we all benefit from, rather than on short-term progress at the expense of others. Let us work to make the United Nations operate in a less antagonistic way. We have successfully tried this approach in the Group of Friends for the Reform of the United Nations, in which different countries, including the Netherlands, engage in constructive debate to arrive at solutions that are acceptable to all.

The United Nations is beset by problems that require major reforms. We are united by the opportunities and challenges of our time. In promoting peace and stability, in debating human rights issues, or in combating extreme poverty, we are compelled to work together and to coordinate our actions. Let us adopt a twenty-first-century mentality to address

twenty-first-century problems. Now is the time to align our agendas and shoulder our responsibilities together. A strong United Nations strengthens us all.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the commitment and determination he has shown in pursuit of a better world, with a United Nations that works effectively for the security, safety and well-being of people everywhere. Even the rocks of which he spoke seemed a light burden under his stewardship. We commend him for achieving tangible results in the area of crisis management and conflict prevention and for furthering the Millennium Development Goals. Secretary-General Annan's personal performance has brought hope and optimism to the hearts of citizens all over the world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia.

Mr. Downer (Australia): I would like to begin by joining with my colleagues in congratulating Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I am also delighted to welcome Montenegro as the 192nd Member of the United Nations.

I also note that this will be the tenth and, indeed, the final General Assembly for the Secretary-General. I want to congratulate him on his important contribution to the United Nations over his term and also throughout his United Nations career. He has been a very good colleague of Australia throughout that time. He has been a determined advocate for peace, development and United Nations reform, and we wish him well in the future.

Earlier this month, on the day before the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks against the United States, a man called Hakim Taniwal was murdered by a suicide bomber in Afghanistan.

Mr. Taniwal was the Governor of Paktia province in eastern Afghanistan. He was a scholarly, gentle-spoken man of integrity — a good man, with a reputation as a highly capable administrator. As well as being an Afghani, Mr. Taniwal was an Australian. He lived in exile in my country for some years and built a new life for his family.

But when Afghanistan was liberated from the Taliban in the wake of 9/11, Mr. Taniwal returned to help rebuild his homeland. He worked for the betterment of his fellow Afghans by adopting a forward-looking model of public administration, far removed from the Taliban narrative of rule by fear. For his trouble, the Taliban had him killed. His nephew died alongside him. A few days later, compounding atrocity upon atrocity, a second suicide bomber attacked Mr. Taniwal's funeral ceremony, killing and injuring many more people.

The task of rebuilding Afghanistan, in the face of such atrocities, is demanding great sacrifices on the part of tens of thousands of brave men and women. It is a country in which many of the great challenges of our time intersect: how to free its cities, towns and villages from the daily threat of violence; how to ensure that an extremist ideology never again subjugates the country's institutions; and how to create the conditions for stability and good governance so necessary to economic renewal and so crucial if its people are to escape poverty and oppression.

Afghanistan represents a fundamental test for each of us. If we are not resolute and steadfast in supporting Afghanistan against the scourge of terrorism, and if we are not prepared collectively to stand up against the extremists, we will deliver to coming generations a weak international system and a far less secure and stable world.

Iraq is another of the front lines in this battle. I acknowledge here the divided views of United Nations Member States over the military action against the regime of Saddam Hussein in 2003, yet today there is a very clear choice that should unite us all.

The extremists have chosen to make Iraq a battleground. Osama bin Laden has said that Iraq is "for you or for us to win". We know what will come of Iraq if it is won by the extremists. As in Afghanistan, we must all commit to securing its future. Iraq is not America's burden alone, and Afghanistan is not NATO's burden alone, because if terrorism prevailed, the consequences would be catastrophic for each of us, wherever we may live.

This struggle will be protracted. Our challenge is not just to keep our citizens safe from terrorist attack; it is also to defeat an ideology that allows for no ideas or belief systems other than its own. It is imperative we see this ideology clearly for what it is: a mindset every bit as brutal and uncompromising as its totalitarian predecessors in centuries past. It is an ideology that

directly challenges the principles and values of modernity — the flourishing of open markets, open societies and open minds. To defeat this evil, we must harness the collective strength of the international community.

I welcome the recent agreement on the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, but I am disappointed that the Strategy's illustrative list of conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism did not include extremist ideologies.

Ms. Grabar-Kitarović (Croatia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We need to do much more. States should conclude a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. That would demonstrate an unambiguous commitment, ensuring that all terrorist acts are criminalized in international law. It is disappointing that the United Nations still cannot agree on the scope of such a convention.

More disturbingly, some countries continue to sponsor terrorist groups to promote their own political agendas. In the Middle East, it is essential that all countries, including Iran and Syria, use their influence over organizations such as Hezbollah to stop terrorist assaults, including those directed at the State of Israel. Any viable resolution of the conflict must include Hezbollah's disarmament, its renunciation of violence and a recognition of Israel's right to exist in peace.

In all of this, the United Nations has a role to play. But, as I have said before in this Hall, the United Nations is not the answer to all the problems of the world. Where the United Nations cannot act, individual States must. Our membership in the United Nations does not absolve any of us from the responsibility to show leadership and to pursue practical solutions.

Too often in the world of politics, the temptation is for Governments to strike an attitude and then leave the substantive action for another day, or to offload the responsibility onto others. We can make solemn pledges — as we should, and we do — to work much harder to assist developing nations in confronting the ravages of poverty and disease. We can sign high-minded manifestos to protect our environment from the risk of climate change. Alongside global security, these are two issues crucial to our collective future. But so much of the talk is mere artifice unless backed up by resolute, practical and well-constructed policy responses.

In Australia's region, practical and effective cooperation has exemplified the counter-terrorism response. A regional training centre jointly established by Indonesia and Australia is helping South-East Asian law enforcement agencies develop the capabilities they need to destroy terrorist networks. Other recent initiatives, such as interfaith dialogues, are promoting tolerance and mutual understanding.

Practical and effective cooperation has also been the hallmark of our commitment to East Timor. Australian Defence Force personnel and police worked with their counterparts from New Zealand, Malaysia and Portugal to restore order after the April riots. We remain ready to continue to provide a significant "green helmet" military contingent in East Timor to complement the United Nations police force mandated under Security Council resolution 1704 (2006).

Elsewhere in our region, Australia has joined in a partnership with 14 other Pacific countries in a Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). RAMSI is not just about restoring law and order; some 150 advisers are working with the Solomon Islands Government, helping to stabilize finances, revitalize the public service and strengthen the justice and prison systems. None of these tasks is easy, and much more remains to be done, but the hard work has begun, and we are making headway.

In contrast, the tragedy of Darfur poses a grievous challenge to the international community. Darfur is a litmus test of the responsibility of the United Nations to help people who desperately need its protection. It is a test of the most basic principles of civilization. We all know this. We also know it is a test that, so far, the United Nations has failed.

In this Hall last year, we assumed a solemn responsibility to protect those who have no means of protecting themselves. The United Nations itself must now redouble its efforts to try to prevent any further bloodshed in Darfur, which has already claimed well in excess of 200,000 lives and brought about the displacement of millions of persons. The United Nations must keep its promise to the people of Darfur. It is no less than they should expect and no less than we would demand.

The desperation of Darfur reminds us also of the immense challenges of development. Members of the United Nations have recognized this through the Millennium Development Goals. Aid is important, and last year Australia committed itself to doubling our annual aid budget to about $4 billion a year by 2010. Australia has recently sharpened the focus of our development assistance programme on supporting good governance, basic social services and security in developing countries. In the South Pacific, we will sponsor new programmes to train people in technical and entrepreneurial skills.

But increasing aid and reducing debt burdens alone will not reduce poverty. Economic growth is central to poverty alleviation. The World Bank estimates that the number of people living on less than $2 a day in East Asia fell by around 280 million between 2001 and 2005. The policies and actions of developing countries in creating an enabling environment for economic growth are fundamental to advances on this front. Likewise, free and open trade and investment are pivotal. The failure of the Doha Round of multilateral trade talks would be a cruel rebuff to the world's poor. The World Bank estimates that a strong outcome of the Round could lift an additional 32 million people out of poverty by 2015.

We cannot underpin sustainable economic development without protecting the environment on which we depend. Biodiversity loss, land clearing, deforestation and climate change present threats to the common good that can best be overcome through collective action.

But collective action entails much more than adopting resolutions and signing treaties. Fine words and high aspirations may give us a sense that we are acting to stop environmental degradation, but they are of little benefit unless backed by practical action. Domestic implementation of environmental commitments has not been sufficient, and the gap between words and action remains too wide.

Climate change is an area where we must move beyond blind faith in a single multilateral approach. The great challenge is to address climate change without jeopardizing economic growth, particularly in developing countries. We need to work towards a more inclusive and effective international approach to climate change. The existing efforts are not enough; we need to bring forward new ideas, not constrained by ideology.

The focus of the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate is the development and transfer of cleaner energy-generating technologies. The Partnership brings together Australia, the United States, Japan, China, India and the Republic of Korea. Together, those countries account for about half of the world's gross domestic product, population, energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. The aim of the Partnership is to bring developed and developing countries together with the private sector to deploy technologies — be they renewable energy or carbon storage — to help reduce the dangers of climate change, while not stalling economic growth and development.

Effective international action on the great global challenges of our time requires more than resolutions at the United Nations. It requires the exercise of strong leadership by individual nations. It requires proactive policy, not political posturing or personal abuse from this rostrum. It requires a rigorous search for sound and practical long-term solutions.

As Members of the United Nations, we have pledged to unite our strengths to maintain international peace and security. But, equally, we cannot abrogate to the United Nations the responsibility that we have, as individual States, for security and good governance within our borders and within our regions. History will judge us harshly if we do not shoulder that responsibility.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Ursula Plassnik, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria.

Ms. Plassnik (Austria): "United in diversity": this motto of the European Union expresses what we, the 25 — and soon to be 27 — member States of the European Union, demand from ourselves, as well as our aspirations for the United Nations. "United in diversity" is also a concrete management principle of our practical, everyday work to promote justice, peace, freedom and prosperity. As the host country to the only United Nations headquarters within the European Union, as President of the European Union during the first six months of 2006 and as a venue for the dialogue of religions and cultures, Austria has consistently aimed at translating this principle into practice, including by providing peacekeepers, despite recent

bitter experiences such as the tragic death of Major Hans-Peter Lang while he was serving the United Nations in southern Lebanon.

By establishing the Human Rights Council in Geneva and the Peacebuilding Commission, we have given ourselves new instruments for carrying out an important part of our work in this phase of United Nations reform. Austria thanks Jan Eliasson, President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session, for his vision, tenacity and endurance. We owe it to his negotiating skills that institutional reform of the United Nations has been decisively set in motion. We pledge to devote the necessary determination to the reform measures that still need to be implemented, such as management reform, the review of United Nations mandates and the establishment of a rule of law assistance unit.

Today, after decades of division, Europe is growing together again. That is the major achievement of the European Union. We have come a long way. The iron curtain is a relic of the past. Today, we want the countries of South-East Europe and the Balkans to take their rightful place in Europe and to be included in the reunification process of our continent. The European experience is, profoundly, an experience of overcoming old and bitter conflicts and of the power of patient and peaceful transformation.

Here, I wish to welcome to the General Assembly the newest European member and the 192nd Member of the United Nations, the Republic of Montenegro.

In Europe, difficult issues need to be solved. Tomorrow, the Security Council will discuss the future status of Kosovo. Austria supports the efforts of President Martti Ahtisaari and his team in Vienna. As neighbours and friends, we urge both Belgrade and Pristina to engage in these negotiations constructively, in a results-oriented manner and with the necessary sense of realism. Our goal is a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo whose citizens can all live in security and dignity on the basis of mutual trust. In the same spirit, a confident, peaceful and prosperous Serbia, fully integrated into the family of European nations, is crucial for the stability of the whole region.

In the Middle East, innocent civilians still suffer from the disastrous consequences of terror attacks and the indiscriminate use of force. Men, women and children on all sides must be given a real chance to live in peace and in an atmosphere of increasing mutual trust.

The goal that Austria pursues in its relations with the Middle East is to realize the vision of Palestinians and Israelis living side by side in security as neighbours in two States, working towards a peaceful and economically successful common future. We know that the path towards that goal is rocky, but now we have reached a turning point. In the aftermath of the armed conflict in Lebanon, all parties in the region have agreed on the need for renewed engagement on the part of the international community. The European Union and its member States can and will make a substantive contribution.

However, international efforts can only support — not serve as a substitute for — efforts by Israel and the Palestinians. That is why we welcome the efforts of President Abbas to form a Government of national unity in the Palestinian territories and the recent high-level, direct contacts. Yesterday's statement by the Middle East Quartet — in which the United Nations plays such a central role — is another encouraging signal. We hope that those decisions will help to alleviate the plight of the Palestinian people and to move the political process forward.

Austria is convinced that the work of the Middle East Quartet should now pave the way towards a major peace initiative. We see great merit in an international Middle East conference along the lines of the 1991 Madrid Conference. We believe that such a forum should be open to regional partners willing to participate constructively in search of a comprehensive peace settlement. A conference of that kind could also examine the longer-term potential for regional security arrangements.

As the Secretary-General has rightly pointed out, Africa must remain one of our main priorities. In particular, we must engage to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in Darfur. It is simply unacceptable that not even relief agencies are given access to help those most in need. It is deeply disturbing that there is no clear perspective for an end to fighting and suffering in the region. As many others, we urgently call upon the Government of the Sudan to accept the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force in Darfur without delay.

Austria is deeply aware of the need for the dialogue of cultures and religions. This is because my

country lies at the crossroads of many different cultures, at the heart of a continent marked by centuries of dividing lines. Our own difficult experience has certainly taught us that mutual tolerance and respect are universal values, which we must all uphold and that religious beliefs, by their very nature, must never be misused to justify violence.

In view of our own experience, we are also convinced that the dialogue of religions and cultures is not a challenge confined only to the international field; this dialogue begins at home, within our own societies. Here, as well as at the global level, "United in diversity" must be our guiding principle. We have to keep our work down to earth. We have to find answers on how best to organize living together and provide orientation in a rapidly globalizing world that many regard as a menace. Ultimately, it is in the work place, at school, in defining the role of women in society, in seeking to create opportunities for young people and in the media that we decide about the outcome of the dialogue of cultures in real-life terms.

I am therefore convinced that we must better integrate the dialogue of religions and cultures in the everyday work of the United Nations. This is a topic that we cannot leave to the street. The minefield of collective emotions is not a good place to discuss questions of belief. Complex feelings of frustration, humiliation and neglect can erupt in violence at the slightest trigger. In a world where connections are established by a single mouse click, reactions arrive within minutes. Here, we need to counteract on the basis of our common values, in full conformity with universal human rights and basic freedoms, as they are the very foundation of our work here at the United Nations.

In the 61 years of the United Nations, this is only the third time that a woman has presided over the General Assembly, and the first woman to do so coming from the Arab world. While we congratulate her personally on her election to this high position, Austria also regards this election as a signal to all women in the world: the time has come for women to take their rightful place in all spheres of public life. We are called upon to engage politically at all levels, from the community level to the United Nations. The voices of women need to be heard more clearly in the work of the United Nations. Women know what holds families, communities and societies together. This age-old knowledge in all its modern variety and colour should not be left untapped, in particular in peace processes. In United Nations missions, at the negotiation table, in decision-making processes and not only as voices in the background. During its presidency of the European Union, Austria, in its recruitment strategy, consistently aimed at deploying women in European Union peace missions. In addition, we elaborated guidelines for European Union missions on how to best comply with the special needs of children.

In his address to the General Assembly at its 10th meeting, on 19 September, the Secretary-General rightly said, "It is shameful that last year's Summit Outcome does not contain even one word about non-proliferation and disarmament". Austria calls for a renewed commitment of the international community to these security goals. We also offer to host the next preparatory meeting for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in Vienna in the spring of 2007.

Development and the preservation of our livelihoods require sustainable solutions. Among the great global challenges we are facing is climate change. Global warming is real. Austria is committed to do her part in combating it. However, in Austria's view, nuclear energy is not the right answer; it bears too many risks and uncertainties to be regarded as a safe and sustainable source of energy.

Solidarity is at the heart of the United Nations: solidarity with the poor, the weak and the powerless. Here, the United Nations task list for the coming years is rich with promise: achieving the Millennium Development Goals in full, concluding the Doha Development Round, fighting against hunger, disease, poverty and exclusion.

On Tuesday, we launched the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy with a clear message: the international community is united against this scourge of humanity. We will not tolerate terrorism in any form or manifestation. And we will redouble our efforts to dry up the breeding grounds from which terrorism feeds itself. Let me in this context point out the excellent work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna, with its Global Programme against Terrorism, in delivering technical assistance to Member States.

It is out of respect for diversity and in recognition of the need for unity that Austria has presented its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security

Council for the period 2009-2010. With this in mind, we have made the rule of law the backbone of our candidature.

Let me close by conveying Austria's appreciation for the great personality who has been standing at the helm of this Organization for the past decade, for Kofi Annan, the statesman and the person. We thank the Secretary-General, in particular for being a tireless encourager, despite the considerable obstacles he has had to face at times. He is a role model for dignity and confidence. He is always ready to speak out, in his soft but firm voice, for those whose voices are not strong enough or loud enough to be heard; to give voice to the weak, the poor, the small and those who feel lost or abandoned. Mr. Secretary-General, the world will continue listening to your voice as it is the voice of hope and steadfastness.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos Cuyaubé, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain.

Mr. Moratinos Cuyaubé (Spain) (spoke in Spanish): It is indeed a great pleasure to address this General Assembly on the International Day of Peace, in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. The Government of Spain calls for a vigorous United Nations system that can guarantee international peace and security in a world that is global, complex and full of uncertainty.

I should like to congratulate our President on her election as the first Arab woman to lead the Assembly — a task in which, I predict, she will have great success. She can count on the full commitment and cooperation of Spain. I also wish to express my gratitude and congratulations to Mr. Jan Eliasson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden and President of the General Assembly at its most recent session. His leadership and negotiating skills contributed to the adoption of far-reaching political agreements aimed at the implementation of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1).

Understanding and cooperation among countries will clear up the unanswered questions of the twenty-first century — a century characterized by globalization, which has spread throughout the world, pervading areas of daily life and causing transformations in the power of States and the system of international relations.

In their analysis of that complex and uncertain reality, political theoreticians sometimes turn to scientific knowledge, but its formulations fail to provide concrete measures to deal effectively with the political and institutional challenges of the twenty-first century. New times call for new politics that cannot be influenced in any way by fear, distrust or suspicion in the international community. The factors and events that shape today's international relations must not distract or hold back the innovative spirit of political action.

Today, we know that technology alone does not lead to progress with regard to security and social and economic growth. Globalization has great individual and collective benefits. It is a mixture of contradictory trends — hope and despair, humanism and barbarity — in which we find serious imbalances that must be addressed with political courage and confidence.

This new era has not resolved old conflicts that are eroding international peace and security. The situation in the Middle East is the present-day version of a historical conflict that has challenged the international community. The adoption of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and the cessation of hostilities open the way for hope that the necessary conditions will be created for a lasting peace. We have already endured more than five decades of suffering and despair. We have already endured five decades of appealing in this forum for a definitive solution. We have endured five decades of the international community's impotence.

From this rostrum, I call for a coalition for peace. This is not about rediscovering the Mediterranean; it is about commitment. We must say "yes" to the creation of a democratic, viable and peaceful Palestinian State that lives in peace and security with the State of Israel; "yes" to full support for President Mahmoud Abbas; "yes" to ending the violence and terror against Israel; "yes" to reactivating the Madrid Process, which began 15 years ago; "yes" to a global peace that includes Syria and Lebanon; and, finally, "yes" to an end to this tragedy.

The only possible way to find a solution is political and diplomatic action, not military action. We must rebuild a dynamic of negotiation to permanently eradicate violence from this region, which is bleeding to death as a result of misunderstanding and pain.

My Government hopes that all actors involved in the region commit themselves to implementing resolution 1701 (2006) and to the tasks in southern Lebanon that have been entrusted to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, in which Spanish troops are participating. We must give peace and dialogue another chance.

From the eastern Mediterranean, I now turn to the western Mediterranean. Spain pays particular attention to its neighbourly relations with the Maghreb, a region with regard to which we maintain an active and comprehensive policy that strengthens our friendship and cooperation. That is why we attach importance to the relaunching of the process of building a united Maghreb.

To accelerate the pace of that project, we will need to find a negotiated and effective solution to the conflict in Western Sahara, which has lasted for more than 30 years and urgently calls for an atmosphere conducive to breaking the current deadlock. The international community must create such an atmosphere to ensure a just and lasting political agreement that respects the principle of self-determination, within the United Nations framework.

The will to engage in dialogue and compromise could clear up this old conflict, as was the case with Gibraltar. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the Tripartite Forum of Dialogue on Gibraltar, which met last Monday in Cordoba, has already adopted its first agreements, which reflect the spirit of the relevant United Nations resolutions. Those agreements in no way mean that my Government renounces its sovereignty over Gibraltar.

Relations with Ibero-America are a constant priority of the Government of Spain in its foreign policy. We are committed to promoting the cohesion, growth and visibility of the Ibero-American community, with which we maintain historic ties and share new strategies and objectives. The Ibero-American Secretariat, which is participating here for the first time as an observer, strengthens our community through dialogue and coordination. The forthcoming summit to be held in Uruguay will assess ongoing activities and propose measures to begin anew the social, economic, cultural and political progress demanded by the civil societies of the Ibero-American community.

The President returned to the Chair.

Cooperation and understanding also guide our trans-Atlantic relations and, in a very special way, our relations with the United States. In a constructive spirit, we discuss concerns and long-term projects that strengthen the international community.

As multilateral actors, we know that many of our difficulties and problems will not be resolved through voluntarism or national action. Our action must be on a global scale if we are to effectively address them in all their complexity — particularly the new challenges facing the international community that hinder the promotion of a more just and equitable globalization.

A sense of political responsibility leads us to resolve urgent global problems such as security and terrorism, to fight hunger and poverty and to manage migratory flows. Through the coordination of the United Nations, the world must promote the causes of sustainable development, security and human rights. We cannot have security without development, there can be no development without security, and we will not attain those objectives if human rights are not respected.

We cannot accept terrorism, regardless of its origin. Our acceptance would transform it into terror and would unleash a spiral of fear in which freedoms would suffer. We must not let down our guard against terrorism; neither must we let down our guard against the erosion of freedoms. The Government of Spain welcomes the adoption of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which does not overlook victims and their families.

Situations of extreme poverty and humanitarian catastrophes are inconceivable at the beginning of the twenty-first century. We must deepen our sincere commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and to the fight against hunger and poverty in order to alleviate the uncertainty, hardship and despair that affect millions of citizens throughout the world.

The traditional areas of Spanish action have been broadened and reinforced through the progressive consolidation of an advanced cooperation policy. Spain has increased the quality and quantity of its Official Development Assistance (ODA), which will reach 0.5 per cent of our gross domestic product (GDP) in 2008. Spain's contribution to international organizations and trust funds has increased this year by more than 400 per cent.

Spain's development aid has been expanded in the Mediterranean countries and the African continent, where planning has played an important role. The plan for Africa has required a major effort of cooperation and commitment to deal with dramatic situations of poverty and sickness, which jeopardize the well-being of African societies.

Future programs, such as the one proposed by President Wade of Senegal, merit all our consideration and support. Poverty has brought us a new global challenge, namely, the management of migration flows, since hunger and need know no borders. Inequalities in the distribution of wealth, unemployment, the lack of future prospects, political instability, inadequate respect for human rights and intolerable life conditions push more than 200 million people in the whole world to migrate. The demographic impacts of these flows are perceived not just in countries of origin, but also those of transit and destination. Therefore, immigration is one of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century and Spain is on the frontline. We must confront it in all its aspects, both internal and external, with measures for development assistance and border controls.

Migrations, exchanges and communications technologies have given birth to a multicultural society that is not without tensions. This emerging reality stimulates the appearance of challenges that demand a critical analysis in order to build solid bridges between East and West.

The initiative of the Alliance of Civilizations, sponsored by Spain and Turkey, belongs today to the international community and the United Nations and seeks to provide answers to these challenges. The management of cultural relations can only be achieved from the perspective of security, education, promotion of culture and interreligious dialogue. This respect amongst the different cultures and creeds must encourage the reduction of frictions that could inspire violence and terror. The cartoon crisis and the effects and wrong interpretations of the words of His Holiness the Pope urgently demand the implementation of the Alliance of Civilizations.

The twenty-first century will be the time when we are called upon to resolve old conflicts and confront new global challenges effectively. For that, a reform is needed in the United Nations. The Government of Spain is satisfied with the reform process in the areas of peace and security, development and human rights. The Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council, the United Nations Democracy Fund, the Global Strategy against Terrorism and the Central Emergency Relief Fund are new instruments that have a bearing on the challenges facing the international community.

Allow me to conclude with a few verses of the universal Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca, from his book "Poet in New York",

> "If hope is extinguished and the Babel of incomprehension begins, what torch will light the paths of the Earth?"

Let us not give up the dream of peace. Let us work together to achieve it.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Madam President, allow me today to pay a special tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of our Organization, for the important role he has played over the past ten years in upholding the lofty principles and values on which this Organization was founded. During the same period, Mr. Annan dealt with many trying international situations with profound wisdom and clear vision. It is our hope that the candidate elected for this important international post during this session will display the same wisdom and vision.

The sixty-first session meets against the backdrop of a complex international situation and unfortunate international events that have uncovered many contradictions in the work of this Organization. Those contradictions require us to study in depth the extent to which the United Nations has succeeded in strengthening international understanding and consensus when dealing with the threats and challenges that face humanity. The current complex situation and recent events make it incumbent upon us to draw on past experience to strengthen the role of the Organization in achieving the noble purposes and principles for which it was founded.

The negotiations preceding the adoption of the 2005 Summit Outcome Document and the subsequent negotiations on its implementation have made it clear that the visions of the North and the South with regard to the future of the United Nations and the nature of its

role in the current and coming phases have become more divergent than before. That was manifest in a number of attitudes that have left visible marks on the international environment.

There is a widening gap between, on the one hand, those who pay the larger share of the budget of the Organization and believe that their contributions entitle them to a larger say in the conduct of its work, and on the other hand the developing countries, which pay their fair share as established by the methodology and criteria adopted by the General Assembly and believe that the Organization must remain the international forum of democracy, equality and good governance on the international level, as embodied in the principle of "one State, one vote".

Some States, with increasing insistence, believe that the Security Council must hold the fate of the Organization in its hands, taking precedence over its other main organs. Those States are robbing the others of most of their competencies and deal with them in any way they see fit, without oversight, even if that leads to the failure of the Council to discharge its responsibilities to prevent the killing of the innocent or the perpetration of crimes of genocide and other crimes against humanity.

This insistence by a small number of States runs counter to the view of the majority of Member States, which believe that the General Assembly is the inclusive democratic forum that brings the Members of the Organization together. It is the Assembly that mandated the Council to bear the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Assembly alone has the right of oversight and review of the work of all the organs of the Organization. Indeed, the Assembly has the right to withdraw the prerogatives of the Security Council, should it fail to discharge its charter-mandated responsibilities or if the narrow political interests of one of the parties to a conflict prevent the Council from fulfilling its task.

This is a time when the international arena has witnessed a growing tendency to misuse official development assistance (ODA) by imposing conditions on the national priorities of developing countries without any regard to the agreements reached in the relevant United Nations conferences and summits. At the same time, the overwhelming majority continues to believe that development is a human right and that development assistance, along with the transfer of technology, is an obligation for developed countries.

Last year was the sixtieth anniversary of the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Astonishingly, some States continue to believe that their might and dominance are based on their — and their allies' — continued possession of nuclear arsenals. These States believe in the need to exercise strict control and supervision of other States and to apply restrictions on the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. At the same time, the great majority of Member States believe that their commitment under the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) not to produce nuclear weapons was made on the basis of a corresponding commitment by the nuclear-weapons States to eliminate nuclear weapons under international supervision within a specific time frame and to achieve the universality of the Treaty. Not only does the maintenance of the existing nuclear arsenals jeopardize the credibility of the NPT, it also threatens humanity with total destruction and annihilation.

Our peoples have a keen interest in the achievement of a larger measure of democracy, human rights and political reform. However, we now can see that some seek to impose these concepts by military force, based on their assumption that their principles, values and cultures are superior and stronger and thus worthy of being imposed on others. At the same time, the overwhelming majority believe that democracy and human rights are based on culture-specific values and standards that emanate from their respective societies. They simply cannot be imposed from outside.

Notwithstanding the increase in the number of victims of terrorist operations, there is an increased tendency to deal with terrorism through military force alone, while ignoring its root causes. Some have made it their mission to rid the world of the evils of terrorism as they themselves define it. They ignore the international collective work to conclude a comprehensive convention on terrorism and to implement effectively the General Assembly Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in a manner that strikes a balance between the respective roles of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Last, but not least, the negotiations on the reform of the Organization have proven that some believe that the international collective security regime was established to enable those who posses the military

might to impose political settlements under international protection. While the great majority believes that the lessons of history, most recently in Lebanon, have proven that military might cannot and will not impose a political settlement. Such settlements must be reached through negotiations alone.

The aforementioned are some of the main elements that set our positions farther apart during the past year. We must take these elements as a basis for determining the premise of our work during this session. We must develop a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the performance of our Organization. Together, we should chart the course aimed at upholding the values of democracy, justice and respect for law in international relations. We must move resolutely towards the consolidation of those values in the international community, in view of the fact that they constitute the real, solid foundations of international peace and security.

With the same constructive spirit that prevailed in our work last year, together with a balanced mixture of realism and ambition, and without the imposition of impractical time frames or the acceptance of temporary measures, we must proceed towards the achievement of further reform and the strengthening of the effectiveness of the United Nations. We must commit to preserving both the principle of consensus and the intergovernmental character of the Organization.

Together, we must work to increase the ability of the collective security regime to deal swiftly with international problems. We must stand up to the arrogance of power of some so that we can protect the rights and future of other countries and peoples. We must also face resolutely any attempts to impose temporary solutions through unilateral actions or military solutions that might result in transient victories that lack justice and a comprehensive vision. Such actions only scratch the surface of the problems without delving into the root causes. They lead to the exacerbation of problems by fanning the flames of hatred and rejection. This, in turn, feeds terrorism and extremism and leads those who despair of the justice of the international system to rebel against the will of the international community.

Despite Egypt's repeated warnings against following the path of escalation and confrontation, the huge loss of life and property incurred as a result of the war between Israel and Lebanon has gone beyond all limits. Lebanon has suffered the total devastation of its infrastructure and the indiscriminate killing of hundreds of innocent civilians, including children, as the result of actions that contravene the United Nations Charter and the basic rules of international law and relevant international humanitarian law. And, despite the fact that the Israeli war against Lebanon caused untold devastation, it has proven that military might, however great, will never be able to impose a political solution. It has also proven that the solution lies in ending the occupation and in negotiating a just political settlement that will eliminate the feelings of enmity and replace them with relations of cooperation and peaceful coexistence.

Undoubtedly, Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), after having been amended to take into consideration the Arab point of view, thanks to the efforts of the Arab delegation mandated by the League of Arab States to New York, is a step in the right direction. However, this step will remain incomplete and will not enjoy the success required unless it deals with the core of the problem in the region — namely, the Arab Israeli conflict.

The Arab-Israeli conflict has squandered the resources and lives of the people of the Middle East for many decades. In it, political, historical and religious dimensions have fermented into a combustible mix that carries the seeds of a conflagration that could go beyond the region and reflect negatively on stability and relations between the various cultures and faiths in the world. Hence the importance for all of us, citizens of the region and members of the international community, to act in concert to reach an immediate, just and comprehensive solution to this conflict.

In its endeavours to achieve comprehensive peace between the Arab world and Israel, Egypt precedes from a realistic vision of the events on the ground. In this context, Egypt is exerting efforts to improve the security situation between the Palestinians and the Israelis through direct engagement with both parties, with the aim of calming the situation, putting an end to all acts of violence, killing and destruction and encouraging confidence-building measures between the Palestinians and the Israelis aimed at resuming dialogue and negotiations. At the same time, Egypt seeks to resume progress on the three tracks of the settlement of the Arab Israeli conflict. This is the main objective of the peace process, which has regrettably been stalled for years. The deterioration in the security

situation must not make us lose sight of that objective. Experience has proven time and again that the success of security measures will remain limited and fragile if they are not made part of a wider political framework that would ensure the basic rights of the parties and encourage them to make the difficult decisions necessary for the improvement of the security situation.

The Quartet has drawn up a road map for peace. It was accepted by the parties and the States of the region. It was endorsed by resolution 1515 (2003) of the Security Council. It was hoped that it would constitute the political framework to which I referred earlier. However, this did not happen, for reasons that I will not list here. Yet, the road map remains a cornerstone for the achievement of peace in the region, since it establishes the principles of peaceful co-existence between Israel and Palestine and determines the general parameters of the final settlement between Israel, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon — namely, an end to the occupation that started in 1967, implementation of the international resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict, and implementation of the Arab peace initiative that would ensure security, peace and recognition for Israel by its Arab neighbours in return for Israel's ending its occupation of the Arab territories and working out acceptable solutions for other pending issues. There is now a need to build upon this cornerstone in order to create an effective political framework that would move the parties towards the objective desired by the international community as a whole — namely, the establishment of a comprehensive peace that would put an end to occupation and strife in this part of the world.

Egypt has closely followed the developments in the Darfur crisis since its inception. It is one of the troop- contributing countries to the African Union observer mission in Darfur. Egypt participated actively in the Abuja talks and has provided humanitarian assistance to the people of Darfur.

There is no doubt that the international community bears a major share of the responsibility for reaching a swift and just solution to that problem. In our opinion, efforts must focus on creating conditions conducive to the success of the Darfur Peace Agreement as the political framework agreed upon by the main parties. That will require the launching and strengthening of the Darfur-Darfur dialogue in order to create a consensus on the Peace Agreement and to convince the parties that have not yet signed it to do so. In addition, there is a need to encourage the Sudanese Government to carry out its commitments on the development and reconstruction of the Darfur region.

If the United Nations is to continue to play the role entrusted to it, we must display a sense of collective responsibility based on a strong resolve to make the Organization an inclusive framework for common international efforts to deal promptly and effectively with regional and global issues and problems. The call to disseminate democratic practices and good governance among the States of the world will be heeded only if coupled with the clear commitment of all States to applying those concepts in a multilateral framework and at the international level. It will be valid only if accompanied by a reaffirmation of the principles of partnership, the sharing of burdens and responsibilities, equality of rights and duties, and, above all, participation on an equal footing in defining options and in decision-making at the international level.

Let us work together to strengthen the principles of democracy in an international multilateral setting. Let us make dialogue and mutual respect the language of our discourse. Let us give lofty human ideals and the common good precedence over narrow selfish interests. Let us cast aside our differences and be real partners.

In conclusion, allow me to convey our sincere congratulations to you, Madam, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. We are confident that, as the first Arab woman to assume that high position, you will meet with resounding success. In that respect, allow us also to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session, for his skilful leadership of our work.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Moctar Ouane, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali.

Mr. Ouane (Mali) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, it is my great pleasure to express to you, Madam, the heartfelt congratulations of the delegation of Mali on your outstanding election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. Your election attests to your eminent personal qualities and is a tribute to your country, Bahrain, with which Mali

enjoys fruitful cooperation. I assure you and other Bureau members, whom I also congratulate, of the support of my delegation.

I should also like to express our satisfaction to your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his excellent guidance of the work of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. History will recall his spirit of initiative and his commitment, which were decisive to the implementation of the outcomes of the September 2005 World Summit.

I should also like to pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who, throughout his two terms, has carried out his mission with devotion and commitment.

Tomorrow, Mali will celebrate the 46th anniversary of its independence, but Mali is an ancient country, a country of traditions, a crossroads of civilization, a land of culture, dialogue and tolerance. Under the leadership of President Amadou Toumani Touré, our country continues every day to consolidate its model of democracy, which has been unanimously hailed in Africa and throughout the world. A new Mali — a democratic, united Mali — is on the march.

A symbol of that dynamic was the signing in Algiers on 4 July of the accord for the restoration of peace, security and development in the Kidal region. The Algiers agreement bolsters Mali's firm resolve to opt for the peaceful settlement of disputes, fruitful dialogue and concerted action. The restoration of peace in the northern part of our country has allowed the various components of the Malian nation to work together in building our nation in a spirit of solidarity focused on the well-being and prosperity of all.

Similarly, our political system is being strengthened daily in a context of peaceful democracy, to the great satisfaction of our people, who have made the irreversible decision that any devolution of power must occur within a democratic and constitutional framework. To that end, in the first quarter of 2007 the people of Mali will be called to the polls — for the fourth time since the establishment of multiparty democracy in 1992 — to elect a president and renew the mandate of the deputies to the National Assembly.

Mali welcomes the choice of theme for the sixty-first session of the General Assembly on implementing a global partnership for development. In that respect, it goes without saying that the 2005 World Summit represented a decisive moment in the international community's determination to ensure a better life for all the peoples of the world. At that time, our heads of State and Government reviewed the implementation of the internationally agreed development objectives, in particular the Millennium Development Goals, and reaffirmed their relevance, thereby confirming their importance at the heart of the development agenda.

In that regard, Mali has made the fight against poverty a priority of the Government's actions. In May 2002, my country adopted a strategic framework for the fight against poverty, which sets priority development guidelines, particularly in the social spheres, in order to better meet the basic needs of our people by creating an environment conducive to sustained growth, enhanced participatory democracy, good governance and entrenched rule of law.

With respect to results achieved, the Government of Mali, with the assistance of its partners, is finalizing a new so-called second-generation strategic framework that will encompass, above and beyond the social sectors, the productive sectors of agriculture, industry and trade. In the same vein, we recently adopted a law on agricultural guidelines that makes agriculture the driving force of the national economy in order to guarantee food self-sufficiency and to ensure the well-being of our people.

Mr. Chungong-Ayafor (Cameroon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Security cannot be ensured in an environment in which the movement of small arms and light weapons continues to destroy human lives, destabilize States and impede their economic and social development. In accordance with the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, we are firmly committed to mitigating the unspeakable suffering caused by those weapons and to ensuring individual security for all.

In that regard, in West Africa and in the context of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), we have taken significant measures to stem the scourge of the proliferation of light weapons. Indeed, the thirtieth conference of ECOWAS heads of State and Government, held at Abuja on 14 June, decided to back up the ECOWAS moratorium on the import, export and production of small arms and light weapons with executive power by converting it into a

binding convention. That new instrument should contribute to building the capacities of Governments to exert stricter control over the traffic in small arms and to improve security arrangements within the Community.

Similarly, we cannot fail to welcome the launching, in Bamako on 6 June, of the new ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme (ECOSAP). Over the course of six years, ECOSAP — via the intermediary of national commissions — will not only provide member States with technical and financial support, but will also contribute to building the capacities of a special unit in the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat.

On the other hand, we can only regret the fact that the United Nations Conference to review the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects failed to draft an agreed text because of the lack of progress in the priority areas of the bearing of arms by civilians, the management of stockpiles, references to human rights and the participation of civil society. As a result, we have fallen far behind in the Programme, the provisions of which we were supposed to improve. For its part, Mali reiterates its readiness to continue to work with other Member States to make progress on that important issue.

Rarely have international peace and security been put to such a harsh test by the resurgence of hotbeds of tension and conflict and acts of international terrorism. International terrorism is, as we all know, one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. In that respect, the attacks perpetrated worldwide vividly remind us that no country is safe from that phenomenon.

In order to create conditions conducive to responding to terrorism, it is urgent that we build national and regional capacities. To that end, we must overcome our differences in drafting a consensus definition and adopting a comprehensive strategy in that area. No cause, howsoever just or right, justifies the deliberate use of violence against innocent civilians. In that vein, we must promote a dialogue among civilizations, which remains fully relevant in an international context marked by a lack of trust among nations in terms of culture and religion.

The maintenance of international peace and security is a prerequisite of any development process. Mali therefore continues to be fully committed to the ideals of peace and stability, both within and beyond its borders.

On the African front, I welcome the progress made towards reconstruction and national reconciliation in many countries, including Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi and the Comoros. In Côte d'Ivoire, despite the clear lack of progress in the implementation of the road map, the peace process has reached a critical phase. Mali reaffirms its readiness to assist the Ivorian political actors in restoring lasting peace in that brotherly neighbour country.

In the Sudan, the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement, signed on 5 May in Abuja, is a major concern of the international community. We urge all parties involved to fulfil their commitments and to work to restore peace and preserve national unity.

In the same vein, we can only welcome the successful convening of the first general, free, multiparty elections to complete the process of democratic transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The recent outbreak of violence in the Middle East recalls — as if there were any need to do so — the necessity for the international community to take appropriate measures to create conditions conducive to a lasting, negotiated and peaceful settlement to that crisis. While reaffirming our active solidarity with the people of Lebanon and Palestine, we are closely following developments in that region and will continue to support relevant United Nations resolutions on the Middle East and the Palestinian question.

While it is now recognized that trade is a factor for growth and development, we must also note that developing countries continue to suffer the repercussions of an unfair and discriminatory trade system, particularly given the tariff and non-tariff obstacles and subsidies for production and export that distort competition. Given their negative effects, such measures prevent the development of our agriculture, deny our producers — Malian cotton growers among them — a decent income, and keep them in the poverty that we have committed ourselves to eradicating by 2015.

In that regard, the hopes placed in the Doha Development Round contrast starkly with the major

uncertainties arising from the recent failure of the trade talks on agricultural products. That is a source of legitimate concern to us. Mali urges all parties to be flexible and promptly to relaunch the Doha Round to ensure that trade liberalization serves the development of all nations without exception, particularly the poorest, so that we may raise millions of people out of poverty.

The issue of external debt is of particular importance to developing countries, especially the least developed. Indeed, despite the welcome measures to cancel the multilateral debt of certain countries, including Mali, the debt burden continues to weigh heavily on developing countries, undermine their development efforts and prevent their economic recovery. Those countries are locked in a cycle of dependence on outside financing and, if nothing is done, will fall behind in their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

In such circumstances, we need to explore lasting solutions for making the debt less burdensome, including the cancellation of bilateral debt. Those countries need investment and to strive for the well-being of their peoples. There must also be accelerated progress towards a substantial increase in official development assistance if the ultimate goal of 0.7 per cent of the gross national income of the developed countries is to be reached.

The AIDS pandemic has spread so alarmingly that, beyond its health dimensions and given its vast reach, it has today become a development problem throughout the world. Indeed, in Africa it has become a health emergency, despite our national and international efforts. In the face of the pandemic, we need to step up our efforts and strengthen our resolve fully to implement the 2001 Declaration of Commitment and the General Assembly's Political Declaration issued at the High-level Meeting on HIV/AIDS in May and June this year. The XVI International AIDS Conference, held at Toronto in August 2006, it should be recalled, has highlighted the seriousness of the situation and the urgent need to take action.

At the national level, Mali has established a multisectoral programme for combating HIV/AIDS, whose implementation has made it possible to provide free access to antiretroviral treatment for patients and to carry out an awareness and education prevention campaign to stem the disease and its disastrous social effects. In the same vein, the Government has created a National High Council against AIDS under the direct authority of the President. I would like to take this opportunity to stress that the international community must continue to give the same priority to other diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis and polio, whose consequences are just as devastating for our people as AIDS.

As for the situation of the disabled, Mali is pleased to have been a member of the working group that prepared the text that was the basis for a draft Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We welcome the negotiations under way within the Ad Hoc Committee, and we remain convinced that such a tool will create the framework for equality and the full participation of the disabled in efforts to build their respective societies.

As for the institutional reform of the United Nations, Mali welcomes the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission, one of the major results of the Summit of September 2005. For many years the management of post-conflict situations has been the weak link of our Organization. As is known, the impulse that gives rise to peacekeeping, for both donor countries and troop contributors, subsides once there is a semblance of stability. As a result, such situations quite often result in a resurgence of conflicts less than five years after they have ended, as we have seen from experience in this area.

How can we not welcome the creation and implementation of the Human Rights Council, of which Mali is a member, the Central Emergency Response Fund and the adoption of a series of resolutions on the follow-up to development? All those measures work together for the attainment of the wishes of the world's leaders to address better the problems and the challenges of our time in order to bring changes in the priority areas of development, peace, collective security, human rights and reform of the Organization.

The progress achieved must not cause us to forget that much remains to be done, especially the necessary reform of the Security Council. While that need is unanimously accepted, it is no less true that not one of the formulas proposed has so far won consensus.

Mali, drawing on the Ezulwini Consensus and the Syrte Declaration adopted by the heads of State and

Government of the African Union, strongly supports Africa's claim to two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats. A Council thus reformed would better reflect the geopolitical realities of today's world and would redress the historical injustice done to Africa, the only region without a permanent seat on the Security Council.

I would like to end by recalling that millions of persons in the world have placed their hopes for peace, security, development and solidarity in the United Nations. We have no right to disappoint them. As the community of nations, we have the obligation and the means to achieve all that through collective awareness and protection of our common values. This is what it will take for us to be in a position to guarantee future generations sustainable development that will protect them from the scourge of war.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Aïchatou Mindaoudou, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African Integration of the Republic of Niger.

Ms. Mindaoudou (Niger) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to express the warmest congratulations of the delegation of Niger to Ms. Al-Khalifa upon her election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. She is the third woman in the history of the United Nations called upon to take up this office, and her election is richly symbolic on several counts. In her we have a seasoned diplomat of great competence and sure qualities that augur well for the positive results that we will see under her presidency.

We also congratulate her predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, President of the Assembly at its sixtieth session, for the remarkable work he accomplished during his presidency.

Finally, allow me to reiterate the congratulations of the Republic of Niger to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who will be leaving the Organization after ten years of intense activity, ingenious initiatives and staunch devotion. There can be no doubt that the vigour he brought to the Organization, the important reforms he launched and the new bodies that have been created during his mandate stand out in the annals of the United Nations.

More than ever before, the international community is confronted by challenges to peace and security. Despite noteworthy progress in this area and despite multiple efforts, horror and despair continue to reach us from certain areas of conflict.

Some positive developments have certainly been recorded in Africa in the area of conflict resolution, notably in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Those developments remind us that we need an operational and effective decision-making mechanism so that we can quickly deal with any threat to international peace and security, irrespective of its complexity. Only substantial reform of the Security Council, along with revitalization of the General Assembly, can enhance legitimacy and effectiveness, especially if it takes into account equitable representation accompanied by an improvement in working methods. For Niger, only equitable enlargement of the Security Council can improve its functioning and make it possible to establish the bases for decisions that will be acceptable to and accepted by everyone.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations must redouble its efforts to reach a definition of a new transition in consultation with all parties, ECOWAS and the African Union so that the matter can be dealt with calmly after 31 October 2006.

The situation in the Middle East — especially in Lebanon, which has held the attention of the international community over recent weeks — proves, if proof were needed, that the United Nations is still the prime forum for promoting negotiations on preserving international peace and security.

The same degree of attention should be paid to the resurgence of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. The establishment of a comprehensive peace in the subregion involves going back to the negotiating table in order to make progress in implementing the road map towards the creation of a sovereign and viable Palestinian State, in conformity with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

With regard to Western Sahara, the United Nations must pursue and intensify its efforts with a view to finding a definitive solution to the question. As to Jammu and Kashmir, the Niger encourages India and Pakistan to continue with their talks.

Another serious threat to international peace and security is posed by nuclear weapons. In this regard, the Niger would like to reaffirm its support for the

commitments made within the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), while recognizing the importance and the usefulness of research for peaceful purposes. However, the increasingly marked division which this issue engenders requires an appropriate response in the ongoing quest for consensus through the current negotiations.

The Niger welcomes the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, which is one of the first concrete achievements to emerge from the World Summit. We should give it our full support so that it can provide effective assistance to countries in post-conflict situations. In my capacity as a representative of the country currently holding the chairmanship of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a region which is still ravaged by conflicts, I am happy to report on the progress that has been made in our subregion in the area of conflict prevention and resolution. Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau, which I referred to just now, today are countries in a post-conflict situation. They therefore need to be effectively helped in order to consolidate their return to peace and to create the conditions for an environment that is favourable to their economic and social development. In order to maintain the ban on the circulation of illegal weapons, which, as every one knows, have stoked many conflicts in our subregion, the heads of State and Government of the member countries of ECOWAS have decided to convert the moratorium on small arms and light weapons into a legally binding convention, in order to strengthen the capacity of Member States to fight effectively against this scourge.

The Niger also welcomes the establishment of the new Human Rights Council. This body merits the approval and backing of all Member States, which should fully cooperate with it. For its part, the Niger undertakes to do everything in its power to participate effectively in its activities.

In another area, the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) will certainly help us to exercise greater control over such scourges as food insecurity and cyclical droughts, which have caused so much damage and have plunged a substantial portion of the populations of some West African countries into an unacceptably precarious situation owing to the slow reaction of the international community. For the Niger, as well as for other countries of the subregion, the human development index would have been higher if development cooperation had seen qualitative and quantitative increases in line with the commitments contained in the Monterrey Consensus with regard to official development assistance (ODA) and other initiatives on the subject.

The debates at the current session are particularly important for the Niger because they come one year after the historic Summit of 2005. The High-level Plenary Meeting which prepared the above Summit already stressed the importance of partnerships, particularly with respect to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In this regard, the central theme of the sixty-first session, namely, the implementation of a global partnership for development, is very appropriate because it illustrates perfectly the need and the importance of a multilateral and collective approach in order to find the most appropriate solutions to the current problems in the world.

I would like here, on behalf of the Niger, to commend the initiatives taken to find new sources of funding in order to provide an initial response to the insufficiency of resources noted during the evaluation of the 2005 Summit. I would particularly like to welcome the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID) initiative launched by the French Government to finance the fight against AIDS and malaria. The Niger is one of the first 17 countries to have endorsed the tax on airline tickets.

It is also within the framework of this kind of partnership that the positive nature of international migration could be stressed and could be included in our search for appropriate responses, which would take into account the concerns of the countries of origin, transit and destination.

I would like to end my statement by pointing out that, for the Niger, the effective implementation of the actions planned to deal with global issues must be multilateral in character and must assign a central role to the United Nations system.

And here I would reiterate the faith that the Niger has in the United Nations, not only because the Organization remains the most appropriate framework and the most relevant multilateral mechanism with which to promote development, but also because it pursues the noble causes which it embodies. The

United Nations therefore must be revitalized in order to be in a position to satisfy the deepest aspirations of the peoples and nations of the world, particularly those that are weakest.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. João Bernardo de Miranda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola.

Mr. Miranda (Angola) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of my Government, I wish to congratulate Ms. Al-Khalifa on her election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. We are confident that under her guidance and leadership, this session will be productive and will attain the goals set. I assure her of my delegation's full cooperation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my country's appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the valuable work he has performed during the 10 years of his mandate, which is now drawing to a close.

Mr. Annan has made an indelible mark on the history of the United Nations by paying special attention to the most pertinent problems affecting our planet, especially the African continent. In particular, Angola praises the role which Mr. Annan has played during the most critical phase of the Organization's history. I trust that the next Secretary-General will find in Mr. Kofi Annan's legacy an impressive reference for the reinforcement of the Organization's capacity to deal with the principal problems facing humanity.

The aspirations to stability, security and social justice of the peoples represented in this Assembly continue to be unfulfilled. The persisting armed violence in some States and the meagre results in the fight against world poverty have been contributing to this picture; consequently, these make up the chief challenges facing the United Nations.

With regard to the new tendencies towards violence, we see something new. It is more indiscriminate; it emerges not only from inter-State or internal conflicts, but rather, and increasingly, it arises from actions that seek to alter the way of life of societies through intimidation and the brutal destruction of human lives.

In recent times alone, over a dozen countries in four continents have been severely affected by acts of terror, which have become the most direct and immediate threat to international peace and security. In spite of political or ideological differences, the international community has, in general terms, demonstrated firmness and unity in the fight against acts of terror. We are of the view that this form of collective action must continue to be the most appropriate way of dealing with threats to international security, including terrorism.

Poverty indexes around the world are also a contributing factor to the bleak present-day international situation. Half of the world's population, or three billion people, continue to live on less than two dollars a day; 640 million people are without appropriate housing; 400 million people do not have access to drinking water; and 270 million people lack medical assistance. Close to one billion people have entered the twenty-first century illiterate and with little hope of emerging from spiritual and material poverty.

Africa is the continent most affected by this scourge, and not even the potential for economic growth of some of our countries permits us to hope that the poverty indexes will be drastically reduced.

Notwithstanding this unwelcome picture, in recent times, we have seen significant progress in the area of peace and security, democracy and respect for human rights. For instance, the resolution through dialogue of the Angolan internal conflict, which was among the longest-running conflicts in Africa, constitutes one of the more significant success stories in this regard. Recently, the Angolan Government opted for the same path of dialogue and negotiation in order to extend the peace process to the territory of Cabinda, where some insecurity persisted.

The establishment of peace in Angola was the supreme objective of a sensible and principled political process led by President José Eduardo dos Santos, whose goals were: to liberate, together with some forces in our region, the people of southern Africa from the dominance of oppressor regimes; to settle the conflicts in Central Africa through negotiation; to extinguish the threat that some States represented to their neighbours; and, finally, to economically develop and integrate the region.

The fruits of this political endeavour are visible today: the people of the region, who before were under oppressive regimes, now live in freedom and have built democratic societies. With Angola's support, one State in Central Africa settled its internal conflict, and, once

free, its people took charge of their destiny and recovered their sense of peace and stability. Another State in Central Africa overthrew the dictatorship that had oppressed its people and had created a permanent focus of regional tension by acting as a source of instability for neighbouring countries. Today, the people of that country are engaged in building a new democratic society by means of transparent elections and national reconciliation.

Now that peace has been achieved, one of the fundamental objectives of the Government of Angola is the complete elimination of factors of conflict. We have prioritized the pursuit of political reforms with a view to the consolidation of a democratic regime and a righteous State, aware that these constitute prerequisites for the maintenance of peace, political stability, respect for citizens' rights and economic development. This is a serious commitment which my Government will not forsake, the main objective being the regular holding of elections.

The next electoral process is at an advanced stage of preparation, and voter registration will begin next November. My Government is creating all the necessary conditions to make the next elections transparent and credible, so that their results are accepted by all the parties, and so that they constitute a step on the road to prosperity. Therefore, the organization of the next elections is going ahead surely and firmly.

Other priorities are the reintegration of the displaced population, refugees and former combatants, as well as the rehabilitation of the economy and the reduction of poverty. These areas have registered important progress. In only four years of peace, roughly 4.5 million displaced persons and more than 400,000 refugees have been resettled. Nearly 200,000 former combatants and members of their families have been socially and productively reintegrated; and countless infrastructures that were destroyed by the conflict are also being rehabilitated.

The national economy is characterized by a solid macroeconomic stability resulting from a coherent monetary and budgetary policy. It is among the fastest-growing economies in the world. For 2006 and future years, we foresee continuous, vigorous economic growth, of the order of 20 per cent.

In social terms, the results over the last four years are also encouraging. Poverty has been reduced from over 80 per cent to 56 per cent. With the ongoing implementation of poverty reduction programmes and substantial investment in capital goods, we foresee a gradual improvement of social well-being and employment indexes in the short term. The global advances which my country has achieved in four years of peace are evidence that its people can look to the new Angola with real hope. The international community can count on Angola as a dependable partner.

In the area of peace, important progress has been made in other parts of the African continent. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, a neighbour and brother of Angola, is steadily approaching a situation of normality, which is likely to contribute to the lessening of tensions in Central Africa and in the Great Lakes region. Recently, and for the first time in its history, the people of this country exercised their right to freely choose their legitimate representatives. Such an act marks a crucial stage in the process of democratic transition and the consolidation of internal stability. It was made possible by the support of the international community, particularly of Angola, which supplied $30 million and some logistical means for the electoral process.

Angola has always stood by the Congolese people and always will. It contributed to the cessation of the internal conflict that devastated the country and is currently contributing to building the capacity of the Congolese institutions charged with maintaining internal peace, security and order. It is now up to the Congolese parties to demonstrate that they are truly committed to peace and democracy. We want to believe that they will not frustrate the expectations of their people and of the international community and that they will respect the verdict of the ballot box.

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire remains volatile. The Ivorian people continue to be the principal victims of a conflict that is jeopardizing the country's future. Angola associates itself with the efforts of the international community to reach a definitive and peaceful resolution of the conflict in that country.

In the Middle East, the continuing violence is rendering ineffective any blueprints for peace aimed at resolving the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Angola supports the right to existence of all States in the area as well as their right to live in peace with their neighbours. It is important to return to a process aimed

at the peaceful resolution of the conflict — a process based on the road map for peace — in order to arrive at a comprehensive solution leading to regional stabilization.

Angola hopes that the people of Iraq and of Afghanistan will be able, in the short term, to fulfil their aspirations to live free from violence and from tension, and that those countries will be respected as sovereign and genuine States.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our desire that the process of reform of the United Nations, mainly of the Security Council, be accelerated. The current composition of that organ is anachronistic and fails to reflect the contemporary structures of the international community.

In the context of United Nations reform, we wish to stress the importance of the recent creation of the Peacebuilding Commission and of the Human Rights Council. I would like in that respect to express my gratitude to all Members of the United Nations for the trust they placed in my country, which is to preside over the Peacebuilding Commission during its first years of existence.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority.

Mr. Abbas (Palestine) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I would like to start by congratulating Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election to preside over this session and to wish her success in achieving the objectives of the United Nations, which are accepted by all nations of the world, which believe that the Organization was created to safeguard international peace, human rights, and the right of peoples to self-determination. Indeed, as President Woodrow Wilson said in his first inaugural address:

> "Nowhere else in the world have noble men and women exhibited in more striking forms the beauty and the energy of sympathy and helpfulness and counsel in their efforts to rectify wrong, alleviate suffering, and set the weak in the way of strength and hope."

I hope, therefore, that this session will promote cooperation between nations and peoples in pursuit of their common interests, namely the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, which form the basis for membership in this Organization.

We must commend highly the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the effective role he has played and the considerable efforts he has deployed, as well as for his wise leadership in enhancing the United Nations and reinvigorating its role. We also commend him in particular for his efforts in respect of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the core of which is the question of Palestine.

Only a few weeks ago, the fires of war stopped raging in Lebanon. Despite the gravity of the losses, the destruction and the tragedy, the international community expeditiously, effectively and successfully intervened to put an end to the war and to provide support to the people and the legitimate Government of Lebanon in order to safeguard its security and independence and to put an end to the era of wars on its land. I commend the role played by the international community, and I hope that that positive and effective intervention will be extended, politically and practically, so as to resolve the root causes of all the conflicts and wars that have plagued our region for many decades.

Indeed, I need not reconfirm the fact that, after the experiences of war and suffering that we have been through, unless the question of Palestine and that of the continuing occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands since 1967 is resolved, the elements of tension and conflagration will keep the conflict alive and leave the door wide open to all forms of violence, terrorism, regional confrontations and global crises.

It is unfortunate today to see that international plans and initiatives, foremost among them the road map, which was endorsed by the United Nations Security Council, have reached a state of stagnation, even regression. Calls for the resumption of negotiations are faced with preconditions. Despair and frustration thrive in the midst of the roar of the bulldozers that are preparing for the construction of illegal settlements, changes in the demographic nature of Jerusalem and erection of an apartheid separation wall inside our occupied land and between its various parts. They thrive on the continuation of the frightful siege, through military checkpoints that have turned our cities and provinces into reservations, on the continuous saga of killings and assassinations that have claimed hundreds of civilian lives, on the demolitions of homes and on the ongoing arrests of more than

8,000 Palestinians, including parliamentarians and cabinet ministers. Some of the detained have been languishing for three decades, and their release and freedom are still eagerly awaited by their families and their people.

Under such conditions, I can reasonably ask: how can the international community expect extremism to retreat or the waves of violence to ebb? How can we and all the forces of moderation and peace in our region forcefully intervene and convince our public opinion that there is hope on the horizon? Or that the option of dialogue, negotiation and international legitimacy — which is our strategic choice and the path which we relentlessly advocate and which we will never abandon — will be fruitful and has a real chance of success?

Living in the midst of this tragedy, I am not the only one who must answer this fundamental question. The whole international community, particularly influential Powers, is called upon to provide tangible evidence that it will support an unconditional resumption of negotiations and provide those negotiations with true international support to ensure their success through the cessation of settlement activity, collective punishment and separation walls. This would provide a positive atmosphere for relaunching the negotiations and reaching the objectives of a just peace based on a two-State solution, as called for by President George Bush of the United States of America. Such a solution must be based on international legitimacy, as stressed in the Arab Peace Initiative, through the establishment of the independent State of Palestine on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and in reaching a just and agreed solution for the problem of the refugees — who constitute more than half of our Palestinian people — in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948.

Lately, we have heard from the Government of Israel that it will abandon its policy of unilateralism and one-sided actions. This is encouraging, provided that the alternative is not stagnation or the imposition of faits accomplis on the ground, but rather a return to the negotiating table and to reaching a comprehensive solution to all of the permanent status issues in order to ensure a secure future for our children and theirs.

Recently, in tandem with all the strands and persuasions of the Palestinian political spectrum, I have sought to establish a Government of national unity that is consistent with international and Arab legitimacy and that corresponds to the principles established by the Quartet. Based on our commitment to these criteria, I would like to reaffirm that any future Palestinian Government will commit to and abide by all the agreements that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinian National Authority have committed to in the past, particularly the letters of mutual recognition dated 9 September 1993 exchanged between the two late, great leaders, Yasser Arafat and Itzhak Rabin. These two letters contain the mutual recognition by Israel and the PLO, the renunciation of violence and the adoption of negotiations as the path towards reaching a permanent solution leading to the establishment of the independent State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel.

Any future Government will commit to imposing security and order, to ending the phenomenon of multiple militias, lack of discipline or chaos, and will commit to the rule of law, since this is primarily a national Palestinian need. The efforts that we have exerted are for the sole purpose of establishing national unity that has real substance in order to achieve national Palestinian consensus around our national objectives, which comply with international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative and call for peaceful means for the realization of these objectives. When such a national consensus is reached and a new national unity Government has been established according to it, it must be viewed as a qualitative achievement — not a step backwards or a limited regression from the path to which we have always been determinedly committed — even in the face of the bleakest of conditions.

I would like to reiterate that negotiations with Israel have been and will remain under the jurisdiction and responsibility of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which I chair. The outcome of these negotiations will be presented to the Palestinian National Council, the highest Palestinian national body, or to a national public referendum.

What we have achieved in this regard should suffice to lift the unjust siege imposed on our people. That siege has inflicted extensive damage on our

society, our livelihood and the means to our growth and progress.

Madam President, I come to you bearing the wounds of a people who are bleeding on a daily basis. We are a people who seeks normal life, where our children can go safely to school, where children are born to live, not die; where youth can find honourable and decent work that provides them with a dignified path to a secure future so that they can be partners in formulating their history, rather than be victims to the cruelty of history; where women give birth in hospitals, not at the checkpoints of the occupation; where families gather in the evening to dream of a new day, a day without killing, imprisonment or arrest.

I simply want tomorrow to be better than today. I want my homeland, Palestine, to be a homeland, rather than a prison — independent and sovereign, like homelands of all other peoples of this world. I want Jerusalem to be the point of convergence for the dialogue of all prophets and the capital of two States living side by side in peace and equality.

Thirty-two years ago, from this rostrum, the late President Yasser Arafat issued his famous and resounding call: "Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand" (A/PV.2282, para. 82). I now reiterate that call. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand. I repeat: do not let the olive branch fall from my hand.

The meeting rose at 8.40 p.m.

United Nations A/61/PV.16

General Assembly

Sixty-first session

Official Records

16th plenary meeting
Friday, 22 September 2006, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Address by Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Georgia.

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Saakashvili: Let me begin by thanking this institution and all who subscribe to its values and mission for providing me — and the citizens of my nation — with the opportunity to address you today.

We are gathered here at a time when the challenges and opportunities for the institution of the United Nations have rarely been greater. And at this gathering, we must ask ourselves where hope for peace and prosperity would be, if the United Nations system were not such an active presence around the globe.

My country salutes the ongoing efforts to make the United Nations even more effective and welcomes the candidacy of a Secretary-General whose competence and unique perspective on gender-equality issues will help advance that goal.

Georgia is grateful for the contributions of the United Nations, for the commitment to build peace in our region and the efforts to create new opportunities for those most in need. I look forward to a continuation and deepening of that productive cooperation.

In a few weeks time, we will be celebrating the third anniversary of the peaceful, democratic revolution that brought a new era of change and progress to Georgia and the entire region. In fact, that revolution caused reactions all over the world. Ours was a revolution that gave power to its citizens, and it did so by rebuilding the fundamental social contract upon which any democracy must rest — a contract founded on respect for the principles of transparency, accountability and responsibility.

Today, citizens of Georgia's democracy enjoy the fruits of fundamental human security, liberty, human rights and opportunity. We have changed the lives of our people, and we have done so by confronting and eliminating corruption, by fighting crime aggressively, by investing heavily in education and health care and by establishing new rules of the game — in a society where little of that existed in the past. The results of our efforts have not gone unnoticed.

In the last two months alone, the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development — to name a few international institutions — have confirmed just how much Georgia has changed. Today, we are recognized as the number one reformer in the world, as one of the least corrupt States in Europe, as an outstanding place to do

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business and as a role model for other countries of the region. It is fair to say that our reforms, conducted in a part of the world where few thought they were possible, have in fact performed.

In two weeks time, we will take another step, further solidifying the institutional framework upon which our democracy rests, when we conduct local elections. We are making that important investment in our democracy because we believe in the necessity of empowering our people with the responsibility and the tools to shape their own future.

I look forward to healthy competition, transparent elections and a more vibrant democratic system. That, in our view, is the way in which we can provide our State with the capacity to protect the vulnerable and provide our citizens the means to build a better life. However, like any nation undergoing great change, we still have challenges ahead. Reform continues in the judiciary and in other spheres, local self-government is building capacity and employment remains the rightful expectation of every citizen.

Our national aspirations are, however, not parochial. We see Georgia as an active and responsible member of the international community. To protect our achievements and consolidate gains, we should face common challenges and threats together. We are doing that together with our friends, partners and allies in places like Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo, where our troops help support international efforts to defeat terrorism and build lasting peace and democracy.

Because of that commitment, we will continue to actively pursue our membership in NATO and welcome the most recent step forward, when just yesterday Georgia was invited to join in Intensified Dialogue with NATO. That is an important decisive step towards full membership. We do so because we believe democracies are stronger when they are united, and that lasting security is best achieved through alliances based on common values.

We are a European nation and that is not a recent revelation. We would in fact be denying our history if we felt — or acted — otherwise. In the next days, my Government will be signing an action plan as part of the European Union's European Neighborhood Policy. Thus, we will take another step, strengthening the bonds that unite the family of European democracies.

It is the goal of my Government to become a model European neighbour. We have learned from past European experiences that the proper and peaceful conduct of neighbourly relations is the foundation of long-term peace and prosperity. That which Europe has achieved in the last fifty years, we seek to achieve in our neighbourhood in a much shorter time. That is our collective challenge and common goal.

It will come as no surprise when we say that there are still grave obstacles to establishing lasting peace in my country. Reforms, especially when they are democratic, upset old interests and old habits. It is a simple statement of political fact that there are frequent attempts to undermine our reforms, our progress and our democratic way of life. We must all beware of those who believe that the presence of a stable democracy as a neighbour is threatening. Georgia's democracy — like all democracies around the world — does not wish to be seen as threatening.

The painful truth however, is that in Georgia today we have inherited the brutal legacy of unresolved territorial conflicts. Those conflicts undermine our stability and the stability of our region. In fact, that inherited legacy is directly responsible for the systematic abuse of the fundamental human rights of a large portion of our population. Just imagine for a moment, that children who find themselves victims of those savage events are denied the right to learn or speak their native language; that the elderly are not allowed access to adequate health care; that young people cannot receive a proper education and that hundreds of thousands of people cannot return safely to their homes where they belong, from which they were systematically ethnically cleansed and which in many cases have been illegally sold or destroyed.

Further, the painful, but factual truth is that those regions are being annexed by our neighbour to the north — the Russian Federation — which has actively supported their incorporation through a concerted policy of mass distribution of Russian passports — a policy that is in direct violation of international law and is unprecedented. There are few more poignant examples of one State seeking to annex the internationally recognized sovereign territory of another State and thus undermining the other State.

Today, I would like to ask all of you in this Hall, if any Members in this great Hall would welcome — or tolerate — such interference by another Power on their

own soil. I doubt it. Yet, this is the situation we are facing today in Georgia. These are the actions that we must confront as we seek to consolidate and defend our democracy. Let us never forget that the victims of conflicts are real people, that the climate of fear that they live in is pervasive and that their suffering must come to an end. With those conflicts, we have also inherited frameworks for peacekeeping and formats for negotiation that no longer function. Simply put — they neither promote peace nor do they encourage genuine negotiation. If the purpose of our revolution was to guarantee to all citizens of Georgia the right to participate fully in the life and decisions of the State, then our revolution remains unfinished.

Today, in Georgia's conflict zones, we do not enjoy a status quo of stability and progress; that, unfortunately, is a popular fiction. Rather, we find ourselves facing a deteriorating situation in which sponsors of crime and illegality are gaining the upper hand. Let us be clear: Georgia is a responsible democracy, and if we are to take that responsibility seriously, we must acknowledge that embracing change is the only path towards a just and lasting peace.

The shortcomings of the current peacekeeper system are well documented. A few examples, taken directly from reports provided by the United Nations and the OSCE, demonstrate how Russian-dominated forces on the ground have served to perpetuate rather than resolve the conflicts and how they have abused and made a farce of the principles of neutrality, impartiality and trust. By choice, they themselves — not we — have, in effect, annulled their own status.

Since the deployment of Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia, Georgia, more than 2,000 Georgian citizens of all ethnic origins have lost their lives in this zone controlled by peacekeepers, and more than 8,000 Georgian homes have been destroyed. For more than 12 years, Russian peacekeepers have been unable to facilitate the return of more than 250,000 internally displaced persons to their homes in Abkhazia, although this is explicitly stated in their mandate.

The United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and the OSCE have been cataloguing numerous violations involving the transfer of heavy weaponry such as tanks, armoured personnel carriers, artillery, mortar, anti-aircraft systems and cannons to the separatists, even as the Georgian Government has been taking action to unilaterally demilitarize.

Russian peacekeepers have proved unable and unwilling to take any measures to halt such violations. In fact, some of them have directly encouraged such violations and assisted in them.

In South Ossetia, 18 illegal military exercises using prohibited equipment were catalogued in the past year alone. Many involved the direct participation of Russian peacekeepers. This is all well documented. Unfortunately, the list goes on.

Imagine. In the village of Chubirkhinji, during talks sponsored by the United Nations, an 8-year-old Georgian boy saw his country's flag from the window of his school and exclaimed, "Long live Georgia!" At that very moment, in front of live television cameras and in front of United Nations observers, local separatist militias moved in, arresting every single teacher in that school and taking them to undisclosed locations. That was done before the very eyes of the international community by the proxies of Russian peacekeepers.

Let us be under no illusion. The residents of our disputed territories are under a form of gangster occupation whose hope is that the international community will lose interest and reward the results of ethnic cleansing. That cannot be allowed to happen. If we stand by, we will have accepted the fact that indifference and illegality are the new rules of the international game.

This leads me to the topic of Kosovo. As the international community seeks to find a just solution to this decade-long issue, we must take stock of the extraordinarily counterproductive efforts made by the Russian Federation to abuse this unique situation for the pursuit of narrow special interests. Here, too, we must be very frank: any attempt — and many have been made — by Russian officials to create or suggest a nineteenth-century-style solution involving deals and territorial swaps in exchange for agreement on Kosovo would be not only old-fashioned but deeply immoral.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I wish to remind all present that my country's territories, just like yours, are not for sale or exchange. Any hint of a precedent for Abkhazia and South Ossetia would therefore be both inappropriate and reckless.

The foundation of modern peace and security in Europe is based directly on the principle of respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty. Indeed, it is the cornerstone of the contemporary international order.

If the Russian Federation persists in attempting to make this dangerous linkage and undermine that fundamental order, the impact will be far-reaching and a Pandora's box will be opened, unleashing violent separatism and conflict not only in the Caucasus but across many parts of our globe. We all must be aware of this.

I must assure the Assembly that, because we are a responsible democracy, Georgia will not allow this to happen. To that end, we will, however, work in the spirit, and on the basis, of the values that govern all civilized democracies. In this I do not believe that we are alone. It is our firm belief that, as Europe looks to intensify its relationship with its neighbours in the East, there is a strong interest in avoiding instability and in rejecting the unravelling of sovereign statehood.

It is with these goals and threats in mind that I would like to share with the Assembly my thoughts on how together we can frustrate the aspirations of those who draw strength from the cynical politics of division and fear. Responsible nations have an obligation to act accordingly, and my Government is firm in its belief that we need to transform and replace the current framework for negotiation and peacekeeping in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It is therefore our solemn duty and sovereign right to replace ineffective mechanisms with ones that work, substitute partial forces with ones that are fair, and replace fear with hope, and mutual suspicion with newfound trust.

Our efforts are guided by principles that are simple, predictable and clear. We will consult, we will cooperate, and we will commit ourselves to avoiding any policy that is destabilizing. Our goal is the pursuit of peace and a peaceful resolution.

But, again, let me be very clear. If we fail to unite in support of new mechanisms to advance peace, we will give the green light to those whose intentions lie elsewhere, and we risk plunging the region into darkness and conflict despite our best efforts to promote peace.

That is why I am proposing today a fresh road map aimed at resolving the situation whose goal is the peaceful reunification of my country within its internationally recognized borders: a country in which all the diverse ethnic groups of Georgia — and diversity is our strength — can live in peace and harmony, as they did for thousands of years, and enjoy the fruits of democracy in a society that both protects and celebrates their unique heritage; a country that invests in new schools, hospitals and roads, rather than in weapons and armaments.

The essential elements of this package must include the demilitarization of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, backed by the active engagement of the United Nations, the OSCE, the European Union and other international organizations. It must include direct dialogue between the parties on the ground, and here I mean the central Georgian Government and the separatist authorities, so that together we can assume responsibility for resuming the dialogue for peace among peoples and among different communities. These efforts can and will succeed through the establishment of an international police presence in both regions, backed, again, by the robust participation of the international community. Once such a force is in place, we will be ready to endorse its mandate by signing a comprehensive non-use-of-force pledge.

More must also be done to restore trust and improve living standards, and we are prepared to rehabilitate the economies of both regions, which is a necessity. Why should our citizens be reduced to living in such miserable economic conditions? We are ready to contribute significantly to restoring access to the opportunities that the rest of Georgia's citizens are now starting to enjoy. Additional confidence-building measures will also be implemented.

Today, the situation in Georgia is marked by both opportunities and threats. Every day there are new provocations, and every day criminal elements consolidate their hold — actions whose consequences will have international implications. Examples include shooting at helicopters, as well as other incidents that have occurred in recent days.

As we move forward to replace and transform those anachronistic mechanisms, we continue to stand ready to work with our neighbour, the Russian Federation, because Russia must become part of the solution. Consultations aimed at changing those mechanisms have already begun and will intensify in the weeks and months ahead.

It is well established and universally accepted that under international law Georgia has the sovereign right to request the removal of foreign military forces that impede the peaceful resolution of conflict. We make no secret of our intention to exercise that right, because it is based on the most fundamental principles governing a nation and the international community.

It is in the spirit of the United Nations Charter that we seek to bring the benefits of our democratic revolution to all the citizens of Georgia and to every corner of our country.

It is with the deepest respect for this institution and on this occasion that I have chosen to signal not only our desires, but also our concerns. Let no one ever say that Georgia was not clear as to how it sought to protect democracy and the State. Let no one ever say that we sought to do so by other than peaceful means. There is simply no other path for our country — or the international community at large — to follow. We chose to join the standard-bearers of civilized democracy; let no one ever say that we did not act accordingly.

We assume that all nations which share these same values are willing to make the necessary sacrifices for them, so that collectively we can achieve peace in our very important region. Let us, therefore, embrace this historic opportunity and not delay.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Georgia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ludwig Scotty, MP, President of the Republic of Nauru

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nauru.

Mr. Ludwig Scotty, MP, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ludwig Scotty, MP, President of the Republic of Nauru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Scotty: The Republic of Nauru congratulates the President of the General Assembly on her election. Nauru commends her pledge to work with Member States to achieve the objectives of the United Nations Charter with transparency and with respect for all views and positions. She has our support and cooperation as she leads this Assembly in the days ahead.

Nauru congratulates the outgoing President, Jan Eliasson, on his appointment as Foreign Minister of Sweden and commends him for implementing the World Summit Outcome Document. His significant contribution has been crucial to the United Nations reform process.

We pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and thank him for his leadership, courage and vision over the past 10 years.

While we aim to reform this great Organization, in line with the realities of the world, we continue to witness major upheavals, conflicts, explosions of violence, natural disasters, terrorism and the giants we have yet to conquer — that is, poverty, disease and human and environmental degradation. We must assure the people of the world that we are committed to finding lasting solutions to global problems, while upholding the principles of the United Nations with full respect for human rights.

But Nauru is concerned that much has been said, but very little has been done. We must, therefore, focus on doing more, as opposed to talking more. And, of equal importance, we must be seen to be doing more, not seen to be talking more.

As a small island developing State, Nauru's concerns relate primarily to development. Yet we have seen little, if any, action to implement the outcome of the Mauritius summit meeting on the sustainable development of small island developing States held last year. There have been no substantial reductions in global emissions since the Kyoto Protocol of 1997. The Monterrey Consensus, whereby the wealthier countries would increase official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of their gross national product, is still far from being translated into reality.

Despite private and public pledges by the United Nations, we in the Pacific have yet to see the establishment of United Nations offices in the smaller

Pacific member countries of the United Nations, such as Nauru.

Despite this Organization's pledge for universality and the protection of human rights for all, we still deny the 23 million people of Taiwan their right to peace and to development without threat of attack, including through the denial of their right to representation at the United Nations.

Mr. Romulo (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We support the inclusivity of the United Nations, and we reject threats to human dignity, including the denial that the Holocaust ever occurred, together with any call for the elimination of any responsible Member State of this Organization.

That is why Nauru will join other Member countries in protesting and seeking legal redress to the violations of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly that occurred during the meeting of the General Committee last week. Two questions were to be debated: a proactive role for the United Nations in maintaining peace and security in East Asia, and the question of the representation and participation of the 23 million people of Taiwan in the United Nations.

The employment of procedural tricks to deny member countries their right to take part in the debate calls into question the universality of the United Nations, for such tricks only serve to deprive Nauru and like-minded countries of their right to be heard. Even more important, it underlines the need for reform of the United Nations.

There must be a greater voice of the many peoples of the globe, including those of the developing world and those countries that can better represent the interests of the developing world. Nauru, therefore, echoes the words of the Secretary-General when he says:

> "I believe very strongly in the need for Security Council reform, and I have said time and time again that no reform of the UN will be complete without Security Council reform. ... They should pursue Security Council reform because it is part of the reason why we have tensions in the Organization today. Because quite a lot of Members feel that our governance structure is anachronistic and we cannot continue to have a situation where the power base is perceived to be controlled by a limited number of five Member States."

We believe we must move quickly to reform the Council and also to include Japan, Brazil, India and Germany in the permanent membership.

We encourage the United Nations, as part of the reform package, to consider a more binding framework by which the many declarations arising from the Organization and its many meetings can be implemented and measured. Clearly, our moral obligations are not producing the desired results. It is time to build a global partnership within a binding framework in order to facilitate the implementation of resolutions.

We believe that each developing country has primary responsibility for its own development. The year 2005 marked a significant chapter in the development of my country when we presented our first national development strategy at our first donor roundtable meeting. Our national development strategy calls for a partnership. It was drafted by community leaders, civil society, the private sector and the Government of Nauru, based on a national vision. It outlines our priorities and the steps required to reach those goals within a 20-year framework. We gratefully acknowledge our development partners. They have given us tangible assistance that has improved our lives.

However, we still receive offers of development assistance that come with unrealistic conditions attached. In some cases, such assistance is used as a tool of interventionist foreign policy, without giving priority to the human aspect of the development agenda.

For any fragile developing State, delayed assistance creates a perception of failure and incompetence and leads to political and social instability. My delegation is disappointed that the intention of the United Nations to expand its presence in Nauru and other Pacific countries continues unfulfilled. The purpose of an expanded presence would be to achieve the MDGs and other development objectives. We call on the United Nations to recognize our urgent needs and to act with certainty, following a realistic timetable.

My delegation believes that good governance yields good returns for all people. Nauru is emerging

from governance problems caused by shortcomings in the Constitution adopted at our independence. We are grateful for the assistance from the United Nations Democracy Fund that will facilitate the consultative process for a review of our Constitution. That process is critical to the political stability and accountability of future Governments.

In the Summit Outcome, we agreed on measures aimed at protecting our common environment, including a call for a more coherent institutional framework to address the environmental challenges of today. We encourage revisiting the climate change agenda to give more urgency to action as opposed to pledges.

In this regard, we also welcome the Secretary-General's establishment of a High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence. Nauru aligns itself with the interventions made by the leaders of Pacific nations who have taken the floor before me regarding the concerns and challenges facing the Pacific Island States. As island States, we are vulnerable to the forces of nature because of our remoteness and small populations. As island States, we are affected by factors such as shortage of manpower and technical capacity, weak institutional capacity, limited financial resources and too little foreign direct investment. We lack information and access to environmentally friendly and affordable technologies, including new and sustainable energy sources. Our challenges are intensified by a lack of commitment from the United Nations to support our development aspirations. We hope that the High-level Panel's report will recognize these special challenges and propose realistic solutions.

Sustainable development and basic human rights cannot thrive in a world without peace and security. We must continue to strengthen our collective efforts in resolving conflicts and threats of terrorism through prevention and effective political solutions.

The proliferation of small arms continues to pose a threat to peace and security in our region. My delegation shares the view of the Secretary-General in his report that, "These weapons may be small, but they cause massive destruction" (A/61/1, para. 102). Nauru is deeply concerned that the 2006 Small Arms Review Conference ended without agreement on further measures to combat this problem. If it is true that whoever is faithful in the small things will also be faithful in the bigger things, then how can we progress towards the elimination of weapons adaptable to mass destruction while failing to agree on the issue of small arms and light weapons?

Finally, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Let us reflect on this passage from the Book of Amos as we renew our partnership of commitment to spare no effort.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nauru for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ludwig Scotty, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Iraq.

Mr. Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Talabani (*spoke in Arabic*): With confidence, Iraq is making qualitative steps in the transition to nationhood. Under extremely difficult circumstances, Iraq is pursuing this goal and the inherently complicated task of rebuilding the country. Iraq continues courageously to reach for the promise of a democratic, federal and pluralistic State, where generations of long-oppressed Iraqis will regain their dignity and freedom and their right to join the civilized and progressive nations of the world.

As we make our way forward, we are keen to establish a deep-rooted experiment with seeds from Iraq's authentically rich and enlightened ancient heritage. We will pay attention to the lessons of older civilizations in Iraq and the national diversity that embodies the Iraqi vision.

The new Iraq has passed through crucial transitional stages in an incredibly short period of time.

The political process has been strengthened and expanded through the participation of broader and more effective social, political and civil forces. Last year, the first parliamentary elections were held, leading to the formation of a Transitional National Assembly; these were followed by a national referendum on a permanent constitution for the first time in the history of modern Iraq. A second round of elections was held on 15 December 2005, which elected members of a Council of Representatives for a four-year term. The Council convened on 1 February 2006.

These developments, supported by the will of the Iraqi political forces and with the help of our friends, have galvanized the Iraqi majority with its varied political, social and intellectual background. They have created a positive political process, which has produced a Government of National Unity and Salvation under the leadership of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

The region of Iraqi Kurdistan elected a Council of Representatives, followed by the formation of a united Kurdistan Regional Government. This demonstrates that political harmony does indeed exist in the midst of the country's broader political process. It demonstrates significant development in our economy, our culture and our social fabric as a whole where security, stability and economic prosperity prevail. A market economy has been successful and prosperous for Iraq.

What we have achieved so far in the political arena reflects a united national will to succeed in the process of building an Iraq that can confront all of its challenges, ranging from defeating the terrorists — who label others as infidels — and extremist ideologies, to achieving security and stability.

Terrorist operations and activities of those who label others as infidels and organized crime groups in our country are not merely characterized by the killing of innocent people or provoking security chaos; they also aim at destroying the country's infrastructure and hampering our ongoing efforts to rebuild the country and place it firmly on the path of peace, security and democracy.

We must emphasize that the forces of extremism, those that oppose democracy and human values, are intent on making Iraq a stepping stone for reaching other goals and for wreaking even more destruction. These forces comprise regional and Arab elements that export their crises beyond their borders in the hope that Iraq will prove to be fertile ground on which they can deal with those crises by fighting their battles on Iraqi soil and among the people of Iraq. Those groups are mainly composed of remnants of the former dictatorial regime in league with organized criminal elements, themselves a product of the oppression of the old regime and the lapses of security that followed its collapse.

The supply line of money and weapons for those groups extends to neighbouring Arab and regional States. They are further supported by individuals who infiltrate the borders, many of them Al-Qaida operatives and runaway Saddamists. Such groups harbour the illusion that they can suppress the will of our people by continuing to kill, terrorize and spread despair among innocent Iraqis.

To confront such evil intent, national determination will flourish, welcoming all the people of Iraq to participate in the process of building a national consensus. The Prime Minister has launched a national reconciliation plan in the hope of providing the protection and conditions that are necessary for political stability, calm and security. This initiative was formulated and developed through the contributions of a number of political parties holding seats in parliament and represented on Iraq's National Security Council. That is how the first steps towards success were taken. The initiative has received the support of several political opposition groups, including militant groups that were previously part of the armed opposition.

We continue to make efforts within the tripartite Presidential Council — the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Legislature — to expand the range of participation for groups that are genuinely interested in the initiative, regardless of their intellectual, political or organizational orientation. We are encouraging them to join the national effort until all forces are mobilized to bring about political stability and security in Iraq. As we are working tirelessly for a secure and stable Iraq, we are also striving to re-establish an advanced and developed State where everybody can enjoy peace and security. We aspire to that not only for Iraq, but also for all States of the Middle East. This reflects Iraq's concern, despite its preoccupation with its internal situation,

about the suffering of its Arab brothers, especially the Palestinians.

Iraq recognizes the implications of the destruction suffered by the brotherly State of Lebanon and its proud people as a result of the Israeli military onslaught. Therefore, we call for implementation of the resolutions of international legitimacy for resolving the Palestinian question, which is at the core of this chronic conflict. We call for implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) concerning the brotherly State of Lebanon, which deserves sympathy and genuine support through funding and technology from all civilized nations, not solely from its Arab brethren.

The ongoing crises and wars in our region impose an enormous responsibility on the international community and the States of the region themselves to reach a just and permanent political settlement that would defuse crises, conflicts and wars. It also makes it incumbent upon us to reach a just and lasting peace that rids the area — and humanity — of the scourge of war, bloody conflict and terrorism.

Iraq, through its Minister of Foreign Affairs, has endorsed the latest decisions of the League of Arab States. Therefore, I call on the international community to accept these fair, logical proposals that are capable of ending strife and achieving security and peace for the peoples of the region.

States with influence at the international level have weightier responsibilities because of the strategic importance of the Middle East with respect to the policies, economies and global objectives of those influential States. They should, therefore, adopt a decisive approach in endorsing solutions that respect the rights and interests of the States and peoples of the region, as provided for in United Nations resolutions and human rights law. The decisive factor in establishing a firm foundation for a regional understanding, leading to just solutions, to a permanent peace based on transparency and the principle of respect for the rights of all parties and to stability in the Middle East, is embodied in collaborative efforts, the will of neighbouring countries and a serious resolve to defeat terrorism and eliminate its hotbeds and causes. A global war on terrorism limited only to military means will not be sufficient to defeat terrorism. We should, therefore, explore and adopt political, economic and other means and tools to strengthen the elements that will lead to victory in that war. In our view, it is beneficial here to consider General Assembly resolution 60/4, which calls on Governments, the United Nations and civil society organizations to develop ways and means in that direction and to work to promote a culture of peace and to condemn violence. It also calls for the formulation of ways and means to expand the circle of dialogue among civilizations in its religious, cultural and civil society dimensions.

What I have referred to serves to strengthen Iraq's vision of making the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction — especially nuclear weapons — similar to zones in Africa and Latin America. Such zones safeguard the right of countries to develop technical capacity for the scientific and peaceful use of nuclear energy in order to achieve the goals of sustainable development. In that regard, I would like to emphasize that, in accordance with its permanent constitution and its higher national interests, the new Iraq is committed not to produce such weapons. Iraq will also join the Chemical Weapons Convention and other international instruments pertaining to such weapons.

We would like to take this opportunity to emphasize that there are no weapons of mass destruction of any type in the new Iraq, as has been confirmed in the reports of the most recent United Nations team to visit Iraq. Given that fact, and taking into account the interests of our country, we urge the Security Council to dissolve the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), either by decommissioning it or by transforming it into an international body associated with the United Nations and funded through the Organization's regular budget. UNMOVIC, which in its current form is financed through Iraqi accounts, is a waste of Iraq's resources. Our people are in desperate need of those funds at this point in our country's development.

Major international objectives can only be achieved by joining efforts and harnessing the goodwill of the international community in the service of all humankind. The United Nations has taken it upon itself to play a constructive role in establishing global environment conducive to international peace and security.

Changes on the international stage oblige us to keep abreast of progress in every field, so as to enable the United Nations to carry out its functions. That should be done by better utilizing resources and capabilities to benefit the peoples of the world, as well as by strengthening the role of the Organization in the maintenance of international peace and security. There is also a need to respect the principle of the equality of all countries and their right to participate in the formulation and adoption of decisions and policies that affect the international community.

We also need to establish appropriate democratic mechanisms to make possible the participation of countries with the desire and capabilities to support efforts and decisions conducive to the implementation of programmes and the achievement of our common goals. In that connection, we believe that the reform of the international Organization must take account of the interests of all, and must seek to bring about equality and justice by reaching a balance through transparency and consensus.

In the light of those principles, Iraq appreciates the effective role played by the United Nations to resolve international problems. We are grateful to Mr. Ashraf Qazi, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq for the role he is playing. Iraq hopes that the specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations will return to Iraq to resume their part in its development and reconstruction.

In that context, I cannot fail to refer to the International Compact with Iraq. The Compact is the result of an initiative by the Government of Iraq to establish an international contact group that brings together countries and organizations willing to help Iraq and promote its reconstruction efforts. The group will also help establish a sustainable partnership between Iraq and the international community to overcome the challenges resulting from our economic and political transition. It is our hope that the international community will fulfil its obligations by providing the resources required to address key priorities and achieve a common vision in the framework of an economic transformation process and a sustainable development programme through agreed mechanisms.

I express our gratitude to the ministers for foreign affairs who took part in the successful meeting on the Compact that was held in this building a few days ago. The meeting proved that the new Iraq is no longer isolated from the international community. It also illustrated the fact that the new Iraq is on its way to assuming its proper place in a free and developed world.

With regard to reconstruction and the commitments of donor States towards Iraq, we would like to thank those States that are providing assistance to effectively contribute to generating optimism vis-à-vis leaving the past behind, launching the reform process and achieving comprehensive development. However, we also look forward to further support and determination in fulfilling those commitments, because we believe that launching reconstruction projects and stimulating the economy will be decisive in strengthening the security situation and restoring stability to Iraq, the region and the whole world. In that connection, I would like to emphasize that, with our free national will, we are committed to moving forward in reconstructing and implementing our national development programmes and plans.

We believe that it is our right to seek the cancellation of the numerous and exorbitant reparations payments and debts of the new democratic Iraq, which must not be made to pay for the sins of a dictatorship that committed many crimes against its people and betrayed the nation. Iraq believes that achieving sustainable development goes hand in hand with respecting human rights, providing security, achieving justice, ensuring the fair distribution of wealth and developing the agricultural, economic and service sectors.

In order to rise to the challenge posed by those tasks, we must respect women and their rights and ensure that they play their role in the development process and in the political arena. That goal has now become a firm principle in our pursuits, as stipulated in the Iraqi constitution, which confirmed the right of women to contribute to our country by holding no less than 25 per cent of the seats in the Council of Representatives. Iraqi women also now head four ministries in the Iraq Government of National Unity.

In conclusion, I would like to address anyone and everyone who harbours doubts that we are as committed and determined as we were three years ago

to achieving national reconciliation. I assure them that the reconciliation process is a promising one. It is receiving all possible support and is moving forward with the backing of all political blocs. Our efforts will be focused on making reconciliation a permanent living reality that reflects the aspirations and hopes of the people of Iraq. That is especially so given that important steps have been taken that have resulted in national consensus and support from all the influential political forces in the country. We have also succeeded in charting a road map to resolve all remaining key issues, including those pertaining to the constitution, federal regions, militias, oil, de-Baathification and the new national flag, emblem and anthem.

As we underscore our determination, we also express the hope that Arab and regional parties, including neighbouring countries in particular, will share our determination and make every effort to halt any activities, support for or encouragement of the forces of terrorism — including those who label others as infidels and the remnants of dictatorial fascist gangs in the country. We also call upon neighbouring States to take the necessary measures to seal their borders against infiltrators.

We reaffirm our keen desire for security and safety for all our neighbours. We also express our adherence to the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States, so as to prevent our territory from being used as a staging ground to carry out acts against our neighbours. However, our people's patience is wearing thin, in particular when we see the blood of our innocent sons and daughters being spilled and defiled, our infrastructure destroyed, our mosques and holy shrines ruined and the rebuilding of our armed forces and security services impeded in an attempt to delay the achievement of full sovereignty. It is difficult for our political leadership to keep quiet forever.

The ferocity of the terrorist attacks that target our people and country will not dissuade us from working persistently and with unwavering determination to defeat the terrorists. In so doing, we shall rely on our people's vigilance, our political forces and our military and security capabilities, which are visibly being developed and strengthened in a number of Iraq's governorates as the tide of terrorism recedes.

The building of Iraq's national armed forces and its strengthening to the desired levels continues apace, in an effort to ensure that our capabilities reach the necessary level, degree of competency and readiness to gradually bring about the departure of Coalition forces from our country. Those forces are present in Iraq in accordance with an international resolution. In the current circumstances, their presence is essential as we carry out the task of building up our armed forces that will be capable of putting an end to terrorism and of maintaining stability and security. Once that has been achieved, it will then be possible to talk about a timetable for the withdrawal of multinational forces from Iraq.

The President returned to the Chair.

At this point, I would like once again to express our gratitude to the forces that participated in liberating our country from the worst dictatorship in history. In particular, we would like to thank President George W. Bush for his leadership in the campaign to liberate Iraq from tyranny and opening up the way for a new, democratic, pluralistic and federal Iraq that is at peace with itself and the world. That historic mission has well served the people of Iraq and peace and security in the region.

In conclusion, allow me, on behalf of the people and Government of Iraq to congratulate you, Madam President Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. We wish you every success in achieving the goals set for this session, and we reaffirm our determination to cooperate with you fully in that noble undertaking.

I also wish to take this opportunity to express our gratitude and appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his dedicated efforts to re-energize the United Nations to work towards international peace and security and to promote development and respect for human rights throughout the world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Iraq for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius.

The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Ramgoolam (Mauritius): I would like to express my sincere congratulations, and those of my delegation, to you, Madam President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

My delegation wishes to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the leadership and courage he has displayed during his tenure at the helm of the Secretariat. Secretary-General Annan assumed office at a time when the United Nations was facing severe criticism and its very relevance was being questioned. His dedication and professionalism have contributed significantly towards enhancing the efficiency and credibility of our Organization and its Secretariat. His initiatives to promote the development agenda of the United Nations have been of crucial importance, in particular to Africa. As the Secretary-General prepares to relinquish his office in the next few weeks, we thank him warmly and wish him well in all his future endeavours.

Since our last annual meeting, several ongoing conflicts have remained unresolved and new ones have emerged. The situation in the Middle East continues to be a major preoccupation for the international community. While violence is still raging in Iraq and peace still eludes the Palestinian people, the recent conflict involving Israel and Hizbullah has not only cost so many innocent lives but has also resulted in the wanton destruction of vital infrastructure within Lebanon. Now that the guns have finally fallen silent, we urge all concerned in this unnecessary month-long conflict to abide fully by the provisions of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and to settle their outstanding issues through United Nations mediation.

There seems to be a unanimous view in the world today that the Middle East remains the epicentre of global insecurity and instability. Global peace and prosperity will remain an elusive dream unless and until the international community stretches all its diplomatic sinews to create conditions for lasting peace in the region. Mauritius strongly believes that a fair and final peace settlement in the Israel-Palestine conflict rests in the early implementation of the existing road map that has been endorsed by the international community.

We reiterate our support for an independent and sovereign Palestinian State existing side by side with the State of Israel.

The situation in Darfur remains a matter of serious concern not only to us in Africa but to the international community as a whole. We are confident that Security Council resolution 1706 (2006) has the capacity to lend strong support to the efforts already deployed by the African Union to put an end to that crisis.

Terrorism continues to be a major disruption for peace and development. The recent adoption of resolution 60/288 — the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy — sends a clear message that terrorism is unacceptable no matter who commits it, no matter where it takes place and no matter what the reason. Mauritius unreservedly condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. But let us not delude ourselves into thinking that we can address the scourge of terrorism without addressing its root causes.

Fifteen years ago, the Assembly initiated discussions on the reform of the Security Council. Numerous proposals have been made since then. Each proposal, whatever its merits, has met determined resistance from some members defending their own narrowly defined interests. It is unacceptable that the African and Latin America and the Caribbean regions are not represented in the permanent membership of the Security Council. It is also morally and politically unacceptable that the world's most populous democracy is still denied a seat as a permanent member of the Council. It is imperative that a reformed Security

Council should include India among its permanent members.

The establishment of the Human Rights Council constitutes a significant step in the implementation of our common reform agenda. That new organ of the General Assembly should perform efficiently so as to establish itself as a credible universal institution for the promotion and protection of human rights. My delegation would like to thank the General Assembly for electing Mauritius as one of the 47 members of the Council at the elections held earlier this year. We will do our utmost for the universal promotion and protection of human rights in accordance with the mandate conferred upon the Council by the Assembly.

The multilateral approach to disarmament has been on the back burner for some time. It is unfortunate that little progress has been achieved in respect of strengthening the foundations of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Mauritius supports the aim of the total elimination of all nuclear weapons on the basis of a comprehensive and non-discriminatory disarmament regime.

My delegation wishes to draw the attention of the Assembly to the fact that, 38 years after its independence, Mauritius has still not been able to exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia. The Archipelago was excised from the territory of Mauritius by the former colonial Power to be subsequently used for military purposes behind our back, in total disregard of Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 2066 (XX). That exercise also involved the shameful displacement of the inhabitants of the Chagos from their homeland, thereby denying them their fundamental human rights. International law must prevail, as must respect for the sovereignty of all countries. We therefore call once again on the United Kingdom to pursue constructive dialogue in earnest with my Government, with a view to enabling Mauritius to exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

We view positively the visit jointly organized by the Governments of Mauritius and of the United Kingdom in April this year to enable the former inhabitants of the Chagos to visit the Archipelago for the first time since their displacement to pay respects at their relatives' graves on the Archipelago.

We hope to continue meaningful dialogue with France on the question of sovereignty over Tromelin, given our excellent bilateral relations. We view the agreement reached in Paris at the expert level in January 2006 to set up a French-Mauritian joint commission for the co-management of the Tromelin zone as a positive first step.

My delegation is pleased that you, Madam President, have chosen development as the focus of your presidency. We welcome your proposal to dedicate this session of the General Assembly to the issue of implementing a global partnership for development. The biggest dilemma is how to secure the necessary financial flows towards developing countries. We call on the international community to honour commitments made to developing countries concerning official development assistance. Equally, we hope for conditions that will allow better access to the markets of the more affluent countries to generate resources for development.

Our meeting today coincides with the end of the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. The progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including halving the proportion of people suffering extreme poverty by 2015, has been below expectations, as reflected in human development indices. Poverty continues to prevail from generation to generation in many parts of the world, in particular in the sub-Saharan region. The political, social and economic marginalization or exclusion of poor people very often undermines the stability and development potential of many countries.

Does that imply that conventional solutions have failed because they do not really address the root causes of persistent poverty? Or is it because instead of taking a bottom-up approach we have adopted a top-down approach, relying too much on the trickle-down effect? The fight against poverty is becoming more and more complex. Only a holistic and comprehensive approach will allow us to push back the frontier of the misery, conflict and hardship that afflict such a sizeable proportion of humankind.

In our own subregion, we have initiated measures to address the issue of poverty in earnest. At the recent Southern African Development Community (SADC) summit, held in Lesotho in August, we debated the issue of poverty alleviation. An extraordinary SADC summit on regional integration, scheduled for next month, will discuss a road map on poverty and development.

There is an almost symbiotic relationship between poverty and ill health, with disease often further impoverishing the poor and impacting negatively on the stock of scarce human capital in poor countries. Apart from malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis — and now avian flu — which are getting a lot of attention, other vector-borne diseases have manifested themselves, and are growing in an exponential manner.

The alarming rate with which the HIV/AIDS pandemic is ravaging our populations has far-reaching implications for our socio-economic development. It impedes our global efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We appreciate the political commitment of the international community to combat this scourge so as to bring solace to those already afflicted and to prevent the further spread of the disease. Mauritius promptly and spontaneously joined the innovative financing mechanism initiated by France and Brazil to introduce a solidarity levy on air tickets to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. The launching this week of UNITAID — the International Drug Purchase Facility — has aroused new hopes.

Climate change is yet another serious threat. For too long, some of us have conveniently decided to ignore it. In fact, well-known institutions and eminent scientists have reached the conclusion that climate change may be one of the biggest threats to humankind. Of particular concern is the impact of global warming on certain vectors of disease, leading to their proliferation. It is estimated that in Africa, for example, we may witness many more millions of cases of malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases as a result of climate change.

Mauritius is fully committed to the successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round. We look forward to a multilateral trading system that will be fair and equitable and that provides for the specific situations and needs of small and vulnerable economies. The recommendations of the World Trade Organization Aid for Trade Task Force, submitted in July 2006, should be implemented urgently to enable countries, particularly those with small and vulnerable economies, to access resources to undertake adjustment and restructuring programmes and to enhance their trade infrastructure and supply capacities.

Globalization does not seem to be living up to its promises. We should not allow it to be a process that unleashes the potential of the few while suppressing the aspirations of the many. It will have to be tamed into a development process that will provide an opportunity to every single citizen of the world to achieve his or her full potential.

Mauritius, like so many small island economies with meagre resource bases, has had to adjust to the realities and challenges of increasing liberalization and global economic competition — especially the erosion of trade preferences, which have so far helped in addressing our inherent disadvantages. My Government has embarked upon a programme of bold and wide-ranging economic reforms to adapt to the new realities of the international economy.

At the end of the day, what is the ultimate role that each of us here has as heads of State and heads of Government? We have been entrusted with the destiny of our people and of our countries. We are but temporary custodians of the welfare of our people and that of humankind. If we really want to build better societies and a better world for future generations, we must indeed make a significant dent on the issue of poverty. We must channel significant resources and energy towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals. And we must ensure that we create stable and sustainable societies.

To achieve that, we can no longer afford to simply keep talking about noble intentions. We must walk the walk, not just talk the talk. Each one of us here has the responsibility to implement national policies that provide opportunities for those who have always been deprived of their human dignity as a result of living perpetually on the margins of the socio-economic mainstream.

My Government is guided by the notion of citizenship with dignity as a moral compass for action. We believe that socio-economic justice is a fundamental pillar of human dignity. We are therefore determined to provide concrete opportunities to the economically disenfranchised, in order to lift them out of the vortex of unjust economic inequalities. I have always upheld the ideals of social justice. I have therefore ensured that my Government dedicates no less than 12 per cent of our last national budget to an ambitious empowerment programme. That programme is funded by State and non-State actors, thereby heralding a new partnership for development in my country. It will provide tangible avenues for the poor

and unskilled to equip themselves with the tools necessary for them to join the economic mainstream. It also seeks to create a new and flourishing class of entrepreneurs. That is one of the effective and concrete ways by which we can truly ensure that we widen the circle of opportunities.

(*spoke in French*)

Resolving the problems to which I have referred to a large extent requires openness, responsiveness, dialogue and solidarity. We in Mauritius have the good fortune of being situated in a major crossroads as far as philosophies and religions are concerned. The history of the settlement of our islands has made that the case. We are the children of several traditions. Our identity has been shaped by various influences, from the East, West, North and South. Numerous ethnic groups, cultures, religions and languages have been evolving in our territory, and we are endeavouring to ensure that they enrich each other. We seek the commingling of cultures, which provides us Mauritians with a complex and dynamic identity. We believe that that is the best way to build a nation and to assert ourselves. As one can imagine, that situation requires ongoing vigilance on the part of political, religious and media leaders as well as rigorous and transparent application of the principles of justice.

We would like to believe that the experience of Mauritius can be applied at the international level. We also hope that dialogue between peoples and communities and communication between heads of State and Government will bring about the end of the disagreements that are today undermining our world, which is the only one we have.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Mr. Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Wangchuk (Bhutan): I have the honour to convey to the General Assembly the warm greetings of His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan, as well as his best wishes for the success of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. I would also like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your unanimous election as the President of the Assembly. Your election is a reflection of the General Assembly's confidence in your personal abilities and the high esteem that the Kingdom of Bahrain enjoys. My country has fond memories of 21 September 1971, when our two Kingdoms became proud members of the United Nations. My delegation also wishes to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for the exemplary manner in which he directed the work of the sixtieth session. Under his stewardship, a number of important decisions of the 2005 World Summit were implemented. We are confident that, under your dynamic leadership, Madam President, the sixty-first will be able to successfully complete all its tasks. Bhutan is honoured to serve as one of the Vice-Presidents. We assure you of our full cooperation and support.

We fully support the theme for the general debate, "Implementing a global partnership for development". In this era of globalization and technological advances that have brought unprecedented prosperity to a minority of the world's population, the international community must unite forces to extricate the vast majority of the world's inhabitants from the vicious circle of poverty and destitution. The global partnership must engender greater political will to address the problems of trade, market access, technology transfer and a host of other issues that impede growth and development in developing countries. It is also imperative that the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits, especially those relating to development, are fully implemented by all.

The Midterm Comprehensive Global Review of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least

Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, which was undertaken earlier this week, has revealed much less progress than desired. It is my delegation's hope that, as provided in the declaration that was adopted by the review meeting, all stakeholders will genuinely commit themselves to the special needs of the least developed countries and work towards the full implementation of the Programme of Action, which constitutes a fundamental framework for strong global partnership to accelerate sustained economic growth, sustainable development and poverty eradication in the least developed countries (LDCs).

Owing to the limited prospects for raising domestic resources, attracting foreign investment and securing funds on commercial terms, official development assistance (ODA) is a critical resource for LDCs in achieving the goals and targets of the Brussels Programme of Action. In fact, for many LDCs, such as mine, ODA constitutes the primary resource for development. My delegation therefore appeals to all developed countries to abide by their aid commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to ODA, with 0.15 per cent to 0.20 per cent of that earmarked for least developed countries.

A summit meeting of landlocked developing countries was held on 14 September in Havana, Cuba. That was the first-ever summit meeting of landlocked developing countries and it highlighted the serious constraints faced by landlocked developing countries. It is our hope that the international community will duly consider the problems of landlocked developing countries and support the road map for global partnership set out by the Almaty Programme of Action.

The task of reforming the United Nations remains incomplete, in view of the slow progress in areas such as the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council and the reform of the Security Council. It is not enough to say that the reform of those bodies is required, while we allow ourselves to be constrained by other considerations. We need to strengthen the Economic and Social Council to enable it to deal effectively with the social, economic and development issues that are of primary concern for the vast majority of Member States.

The Security Council needs to be reformed to reflect today's realities and challenges. My delegation strongly believes that the status quo is no longer an option. The Security Council has to be urgently reformed in all its aspects, including its composition and working methods. It is regrettable that the proposal submitted by the Group of Four at the sixtieth session was not acted upon. It is my delegation's hope that the sixty-first session will be able to bring about real reform of the Security Council.

We welcome the adoption by the sixtieth session of the resolution on the revitalization of the General Assembly. We must continue with our efforts to further enhance the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of this body, which is the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

Terrorism continues to threaten peace, security and development in many parts of the world.

The recent train bombings in Mumbai, India, and the plot to blow up transatlantic aircraft uncovered in London last August remind us of the need to take strong measures against international terrorism. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the General Assembly's adoption at its sixtieth session of the United Nations Global Counter-terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288). The next important steps are to implement the Strategy and to renew efforts to conclude a comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

Recent developments in the Middle East once again highlight the urgency of finding a solution to the problem there. My delegation calls upon all concerned parties and others in a position to help to strive for a just and comprehensive solution.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my country's deep appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan for his dedicated service to the United Nations as its Secretary-General. We are confident that the next Secretary-General, who should be from Asia, will lead the United Nations to greater heights in the service of humankind.

Allow me to take a few moments to apprise the international community of the progress that Bhutan is making. As a small, least developed country with a population of just over half a million people, the hurdles we face are enormous. Yet, under the far-sighted leadership of His Majesty the King, the country has been making significant progress in all fields.

On the political front, most notable is the culmination of the reforms that will usher in parliamentary democracy in 2008. Those changes are taking place in an environment of peace, progress and stability. We are hopeful that the transition will be smooth and the final outcome enduring.

Bhutan's development is guided by the conviction that human well-being and contentment must be promoted through the pursuit of material progress, on the one hand, and the fulfilment of spiritual and emotional needs, on the other. That development philosophy, as I have stated before in the Assembly, is defined as the pursuit of gross national happiness, rather than just gross national product. We will be happy to share our experience on that development philosophy, as we did at the international conference on the theme "Rethinking development: local pathways to global well-being", which was held in Nova Scotia, Canada, in June 2005. We believe that the happy planet index that was recently published in the United Kingdom by the New Economics Foundation bears close a relation to the development paradigm pursued by Bhutan.

I wish the General Assembly every success.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Elias Camsek Chin, Vice-President of the Republic of Palau

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Palau.

Mr. Elias Camsek Chin, Vice-President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Elias Camsek Chin, Vice-President of the Republic of Palau, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Chin (Palau): Let me begin by offering my congratulations to you, Madam President. We would also like to thank former Assembly President Jan Eliasson for his able leadership over the past year. Our deep appreciation also goes to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who has served the Organization with skill and devotion.

Palau joins others in welcoming Montenegro, the newest State Member of the United Nations. We look forward to its participation in our debates.

Participation in the United Nations has special meaning for Palau. We were the last country to emerge from the United Nations Trusteeship System. During trusteeship, it was the United Nations that showed us that every country, regardless of size, had a role to play. The United Nations provided our nation with a platform from which we could achieve independence and establish our sovereignty. For that we are forever grateful.

Palau is often seen as a paradise of swaying palm trees and ocean breezes. But that simplistic view fails to recognize the challenges we face as a small island developing State. In this shrinking world, the actions of distant countries are having a profound effect on us. We come to the Assembly now, asking for its help once again as we face those difficult issues.

One of the issues that we hope the General Assembly will act on this year is deep-sea bottom trawling. As the Secretary-General has reported, bottom trawling is responsible for 95 per cent of the worldwide damage to seamount ecosystems. It is an irresponsible practice, and Palau has passed a law banning all bottom trawling within our waters. In doing so, Palau followed the lead set by Japan, the United States, Norway, Australia and many other responsible countries.

It is now time to ensure that similar measures are taken for international waters. That is why Palau has joined with our Pacific colleagues in Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands and Micronesia to propose an interim prohibition on unregulated bottom trawling. Our proposal represents the strong determination of our region to protect the oceans upon which we all ultimately rely.

Another issue of great importance is that of global warming. Coral bleaching, a rise in sea level and altered fish migration all threaten the future of Palau and other small island nations. Reversing that trend is one of our top priorities. We continue to urge the international community to act aggressively to reduce emissions that lead to global warming.

Palau is a democratic society. Our children know the importance of culture and community. We guarantee human rights in our nation. We also know that flying our flag here at the United Nations carries with it certain obligations, and we have met them all. Palau has deployed peacekeepers to regional and international missions. When natural disasters strike, Palau responds willingly and voluntarily. When the international community called upon countries to preserve biodiversity, Palau came forward with the Micronesian Challenge. That initiative will protect 462 coral species, which represent 58 per cent of all known corals.

Our future as a nation and the future of our children depend upon the viability of our environment, especially of the oceans. Palau relies on the health of its amazing reefs and waters to provide food for our people and to support our tourism industry. Without those we will not be able to develop a sustainable economy that will allow our children to live and work in their homeland. To provide for them, we look to the United Nations for leadership and support. To that end, Palau remains open to ideas for harmonizing the environmental agencies at the United Nations. We applaud efforts to streamline the process of accessing those agencies; that would make them more responsive to small nations. In the same vein, Palau would like to state that difficulties in accessing assistance in claiming our extended continental shelf have made it clear that we will have a hard time meeting the 2009 deadline for submissions.

Last year, in this historic Hall, we noted our concern that the United Nations, its offices and organizations did not have a permanent representative in Palau. In June, it was announced that a coalition comprised of the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund would open a total of eight new offices in Pacific island countries, including Palau. We welcome that historic accomplishment. It is a giant step towards harmonization within the United Nations. For Palau, it will give us one of the tools we need most for sustainable development, namely, local capacity-building.

Let us not forget the continuing threat of terrorism. We recognize that terrorism anywhere is a threat to people everywhere. We have looked for assistance to improve our anti-terrorism capacity. Palau has met, and worked with, the Counter-terrorism Executive Directorate to advance our requests for assistance, particularly in the area of combating money-laundering and the financing of terrorism. Unfortunately, the efforts of the Directorate have been insufficient. Our hope is that, during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, the United Nations will be able to help smaller countries in addressing that threat.

We would also like to take a moment to thank a few of the many partners that have assisted Palau this past year. The efforts of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme deserve special recognition. The GEF programme in the North Pacific has resulted in an effective mechanism to protect our environment through grass-roots projects.

Palau has also partnered with a number of countries that have supported our development. First, the United States has provided in-country diplomatic representation and years of support. We acknowledge the generosity of the United States in responding to natural disasters in Asia and the Pacific region. We thank them for that. Japan has also provided invaluable assistance to Palau. The addition of Japan as a member of the Security Council would help inform other Council members that are less familiar with our regional needs and concerns. We have supported, and continue to support, the G-4 draft resolution, and hope that the Assembly will address the draft resolution this year.

Taiwan has been another steady supporter of Palau's development. We continue to assert that the world would benefit from Taiwan's membership in the United Nations and other international institutions. This year, Palau co-sponsored a draft resolution calling for a proactive role for the United Nations in addressing the tensions in East Asia. We were disappointed that the actions of the General Committee prevented a debate on that draft resolution.

Palau would also like to recognize Australia's steadfast commitment to stability in our region, as well as its dedication to capacity-building. Through such initiatives as its patrol boat programme, Australia enables Palau to address illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, which threatens our sovereignty and the marine habitats that surround our island nation.

We call on all parties in the Sudan to work together to mitigate the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. As Mr. Jan Eliasson stated on 11 September,

> "we have ... seen the horrors of Cambodia, Rwanda and Srebrenica without taking action. The same tragedy must not befall the people in Darfur or elsewhere. The responsibility to protect must move from declaration to action." (*A/60/PV.100, p. 6*)

Lastly, Palau would like to take this opportunity to express our hope that the Middle East peace process can be successfully restarted. We are hopeful that the expanded United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) will bring peace and security to both Israel and Lebanon. We stress the need for full implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), including its preamble. We join the call for the unconditional release of the kidnapped Israeli soldiers. It is critical that the reconstructed UNIFIL force be effective and capable of enforcing the arms embargo as called for.

On behalf of Palau, a small island nation in the wide Pacific Ocean, let me thank the entire Assembly in my country's native language. Kom Kmal Mesulang. God bless you all.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Palau for the statement he has just made.

> *Mr. Elias Camsek Chin, Vice-President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted from the rostrum.*

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Margaret Beckett, MP, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Beckett (United Kingdom): First, I would like to pay tribute to the work of the Secretary-General. A former British Minister once said of the NATO Secretary General that he should be more of a secretary and less of a general. Kofi Annan has been more of everything: more of a diplomat, more of a reformer and more of a moral voice of leadership in the world.

In a world shattered by conflict, the founders of the United Nations saw that only by coming together, united in support of larger freedom, could we build our shared future. Today, when the world's nations are even more interdependent than they were in 1945, what does it mean to stand, as they intended, united? At one level it means taking action when things go wrong, where there is an actual breakdown of security or a descent into violence or chaos. Today in particular, the United Nations faces the challenges posed by multiple upheavals and crises across the world.

In the Middle East the United Nations is playing a vital role in establishing stability in southern Lebanon. Troops from the European Union are deploying alongside those from the Middle East, Asia and Africa. All Member States must meet their obligations under Security Council resolutions 1701 (2006), 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), if we are to enable Lebanon to be the proud, democratic and diverse nation that its people want it to be.

But we are all aware that this most recent conflict in Lebanon had its roots in the continuing failure to achieve a just solution to the Palestinian question. That is why the United Kingdom has consistently argued that there can be no higher priority than reinvigorating the Middle East peace process.

In Iraq, Prime Minister Al-Maliki's national reconciliation plan can help leaders from all communities come together. At this crucial juncture, we must all intensify our support. The International Compact provides the right vehicle. It allows the Iraqi Government to set its own vision and shows us how we can help turn that vision into a reality.

In Afghanistan, real progress has been made, with the United Nations taking a leading role in coordinating the international effort. But real challenges still lie ahead. NATO's task of securing the south of the country is far from easy. Soldiers from many NATO countries, not least my own, have given their lives to provide a better future for the people of Afghanistan. The Afghan Government and people, too, want security, development and good governance. The United Kingdom and the international community are determined to help them to achieve them.

We must show a similar shared determination in urging the Government of Iran to address international concerns over its nuclear ambitions and its support for terrorism. The proposals put forward by Britain, France and Germany with China, Russia and the United States offer a path for the Iranian Government to develop a more constructive relationship with the rest of the world and give Iran's talented population the opportunities and prosperity that is their right, including, if they wish, a modern nuclear power industry. We want to be able to resume negotiations.

Iran knows what is required, and that the alternative is increasing isolation.

Darfur remains in crisis. I pay tribute to the efforts of the African Union and its peacekeepers. Wednesday's decision to extend their mandate averted a security vacuum. We must now strengthen the force of the African Union Mission in the Sudan. But it can only be a temporary reprieve. We also need action immediately on the political and humanitarian front. Those who have not signed the Darfur Peace Agreement must do so. Those who have must abide by its provisions.

To underpin that Agreement, we urgently need a greatly strengthened international presence on the ground, with the active engagement and support of Asian and Muslim, as well as African, countries. That is why the Security Council authorized the deployment of United Nations peacekeepers to Darfur. I urge President Bashir to extend the Sudan's relations with the United Nations in a common purpose to bring lasting peace and genuine stability to the whole of the Sudan. It is, above all, his responsibility.

The security challenges the world faces are real. As an international community we must deal with them. But standing united also requires us to take up a second, deeper level of global responsibility, namely, tackling the underlying problems that promote conflict and underdevelopment. We must strive to promote sound global values and to build multilateral systems within which nations and individuals can cooperate, co-exist and each achieve their potential.

Many representatives to the Assembly have already spoken of the need to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Progress on those Goals is a moral imperative rooted in a concern for, and an understanding of, our common humanity. But it is also a political imperative, because there will be no stability and security in our global community while so many millions of men, women and children in that community face only a life of hunger, poverty, inequality and disease.

The same is true for those whose lives are shattered by conflict or blighted by injustice. The Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council are new structures that give us new opportunities and new impetus. At the same time, we must see a step change in efforts towards an international arms trade treaty that will end the irresponsible transfer of arms that fuel conflict and facilitate the abuse of human rights. That is why the United Kingdom, with six other countries, will introduce a draft resolution in the First Committee to establish a process to work towards a legally binding treaty on the trade in all conventional arms.

Collectively, we have a responsibility to protect human life and a duty to defend the international institutions that help us as a community to achieve that goal. The answers lie not in division or in personal attacks, but in the earnest and consistent pursuit of justice and peace.

Our collective responsibility to each other is nowhere more evident than in the huge challenge posed by climate change. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, made climate change one of our two G8 priorities last year, alongside poverty reduction in Africa. When the Prime Minister appointed me as his Foreign Secretary, in May, he specifically charged me with putting climate security at the heart of our foreign policy. We will not solve that problem if we do not each assume our share of the responsibility for tackling it. Nobody can protect themselves from climate change unless we protect each other by building a global basis for climate security. That goes to the heart of the United Nations mission, and the United Nations must be at the heart of the solution.

To put it starkly, if we all try to freeride, we will all end up in free fall, with accelerating climate change the result of our collective failure to respond in time to that shared threat that faces us all. Look just at the danger posed by rising sea levels. Potentially, that could cause massive damage to some of the key urban centres of our global civilization. London, Shanghai, Dhaka, Singapore, Amsterdam, Cairo and, yes, Manhattan are all at risk. That is why we must all — as foreign ministers, heads of Government and heads of State — be ready to do more, and do it more quickly. Our climate presents us with an ever-growing threat to international security. Dealing with climate change, by both adapting to what is now inevitable and acting to avert still greater damage, is no longer a choice, it is an imperative.

We need common commitment and genuine action. We must all be ready to find a way to get the agenda moving beyond Kyoto. The Gleneagles dialogue meeting in Mexico at the beginning of

October will be one such opportunity, a chance for developed and developing countries to work together on that shared problem.

If we do not act now, an unstable climate will undermine our progress in all those other areas that matter to us, not least the Millennium Development Goals themselves. Take one of the most basic needs of all, water. Already perhaps two fifths of the world's population finds it hard to get the water they need. At the same time, many in the world rely on affordable energy to help lift themselves out of poverty — and, indeed, perhaps to give them access to that water. But there is a dilemma: if we provide affordable energy by burning fossil fuels, we accelerate climate change. That means further disrupting water supplies. For some people who now have plenty of water it will mean new shortages. For those who already have little, it will mean less. In turn, everywhere less water means less food.

Let me give a specific example of that dilemma. The whole world, as well as the Chinese people, is benefiting from the great success of the Chinese economy. No one in China or elsewhere wants that growth to stop. But it is based, in China as elsewhere, on a rapidly increasing use of the fossil fuels that are creating climate change. Yet China is a country already vulnerable to climate change. The Chinese Government knows that as the Himalayan glaciers melt and agricultural land shrinks, crop yields will fall, fresh water will become more scarce and the economy itself will suffer, and with it the world's economy.

All the nations of the Arctic Circle are being, and will be, affected by melting permafrost, with disruptions to infrastructure and to investment. The Vice-President of Palau has just given us a vivid description of what the environment means for his nation. We all share, to a greater or lesser extent, that same dilemma. If we do not act on climate change, we risk undermining the very basis of the prosperity and security we are seeking to achieve. That is why we must recognize that talk of having either a successful economy or a stable climate is a false choice. We must work together to find paths for economic growth that will protect our climate. The truth is that we already have much of the technology we need to move to a low-carbon economy. But we must now deploy it very much more rapidly. What we do in the next 10 years will count the most.

The former chief economist of the World Bank, Sir Nicholas Stern, will shortly publish one of the most significant and wide-reaching analyses so far of the economic impacts of climate change itself. One of the key emerging findings of his work is that while it will not cost the Earth to solve climate change, it will cost the Earth, literally as well as financially, if we do not.

Moreover, if we learn to tackle climate change together, we have an opportunity to build trust between nations and to strengthen the multilateral system. But if we get it wrong, that trust will be further eroded. It is the developed, rich world that bears a large responsibility for the present level of greenhouse gas emissions, but it is the poorest in our global community — those least able to bear it — who will bear the brunt of climate insecurity. We all need to do more. But the rich world should of course continue to lead the effort, applying the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, which must continue to be our guide. In the joint endeavour which the United Nations represents there can be no more stark or more urgent warning than that.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Li Zhaoxing, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China.

Mr. Li Zhaoxing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to begin by congratulating you, Madam President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I am confident that, under your guidance, this session will achieve full success. I also wish to pay tribute to Mr. Jan Eliasson, President of the last session, and to Secretary-General Kofi Annan. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Republic of Montenegro on becoming a Member of the United Nations.

The world is experiencing profound and complex changes. Peace, development and cooperation have become trends of our times and represent the common aspirations of all countries and peoples in the world. However, the world is not tranquil and the issue of development remains prominent. There is still a long way to go in the pursuit of durable peace and common development. Recently, the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, the Iranian nuclear issue and the Lebanese-Israeli conflict have flared up, adversely affecting regional and global stability and testing the wisdom, unity and patience of the international community.

To maintain peace is the shared mission of the entire international community. Consultations based on equality and peaceful negotiations are the only effective means to resolve disputes. China, as a permanent member of the Security Council and a member of the international community, will continue to make every effort to achieve a peaceful resolution of hotspot issues.

As regards the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, China is committed to maintaining peace and stability on the Peninsula, making it free of nuclear weapons and promoting the six-party talks. During the Security Council's deliberations in July regarding the missile tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the related resolution, China made strenuous efforts to engage the parties concerned, in an effort to maintain peace on the Peninsula and in North-East Asia and preserve the unity and authority of the Security Council and safeguard the progress already made in the six-party talks.

Long-standing antagonism and mistrust between the parties concerned is the main cause of the current difficulty. All parties should be patient and pragmatic and act with vision to reduce differences and remove obstacles through dialogue. The six-party talks remain an effective mechanism to enhance understanding and trust and resolve the Korean nuclear issue. We hope that the parties involved will be cool-headed and more flexible, expand common ground, meet each other halfway and work together for the early resumption of the six-party talks and progressive implementation of the joint statement. That is the only viable solution to the Korean nuclear issue.

With respect to the Iranian nuclear issue, China calls for upholding the integrity of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, and is opposed to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. It has worked for a peaceful resolution of the issue in order to promote peace and stability in the Middle East. At the same time, the legitimate right of countries to the peaceful use of nuclear energy should be fully respected, provided they fulfil their relevant international obligations.

Diplomatic negotiation represents the best chance to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue and serve the interests of all parties. China hopes that the parties involved will exercise patience and restraint, continue to take a flexible approach and remain committed to the right course of pursuing a peaceful resolution. China will continue to play a constructive role in working for an appropriate settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue.

As regards the Lebanese-Israeli conflict, China opposes any move that will undermine peace and stability in the region, and calls for a comprehensive cessation of hostilities. China welcomes Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and hopes that it will be strictly observed. China hopes that the parties concerned will reach an early agreement on a framework of political settlement that is both just and durable.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the Middle East issue. The peace process should be re-started in keeping with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the principle of land for peace, in the interest of reaching an early and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East issue, including the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, so that the countries involved can live in harmony and the region can enjoy durable peace.

The United Nations has played an instrumental role in resolving regional flashpoints this year. But the Organization also faces major challenges. In the new international environment, to enhance its role through reform is in the common interest of humankind. The United Nations needs to take resolute steps in carrying out reform. The United Nations should develop in a way that promotes the purposes and principles of its Charter, upholds the unity and cooperation of the Organization and serves the collective interests of its Members. The reform of the United Nations should be comprehensive in coverage, and progress should be made in security, development, human rights and other fields. More should be done to promote development and facilitate the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. The reform of the Organization should, as far as possible, satisfy the needs of its Member States, particularly those from the developing world. The reform should be a democratic process and full consultations should be conducted to reach widespread consensus. Major controversial issues should be handled with caution and dealt with through in-depth consultations.

China welcomes the progress made in reforming the United Nations, in particular the progress in implementing the World Summit Outcome. We will

pledge $3 million to the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. We will continue to work with other countries to make progress in the reform of the United Nations, strengthen the unity and authority of the Organization and increase its efficiency and capacity to respond to challenges.

As the chief administrator of the United Nations, the Secretary-General has an important role to play. In the election of the next Secretary-General, China will firmly support an Asian candidate. We are convinced that Asia can produce a competent and well-respected Secretary-General acceptable to all Member States.

The scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations involves the interests of all Member States and constitutes the financial foundation of the Organization. All Member States have an obligation to pay their assessments on time and in full. The ability to pay is the basic principle governing the scale of assessments. It should be adhered to, as it has proved effective and represents the general consensus of Member States. Over the years, China has honoured its financial obligations in good faith and has made appropriate contributions to the budget of the United Nations. As China's economy grows, we are prepared to increase our contributions to the Organization's budget in accordance with the principle of ability to pay. We are ready to take part in relevant discussions in a constructive way, and hope that a fair and equitable formula will be reached on the basis of extensive consultations.

Without overall development, global peace and progress cannot be sustained. In addition to developing the concept of partnership and improving its modalities, all countries should honour our commitment to the global partnership for development set out in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and last year's World Summit Outcome.

Countries should shoulder the primary responsibility for their own development and implement comprehensive development strategies in keeping with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The international community — and developed countries in particular — should increase development assistance, promote international trade, technology transfers and investment, offer more extensive debt relief, provide more support to developing countries and respect their ownership of national development strategies.

The United Nations should play a bigger role in the field of development. It should create a fair and equitable framework to assess progress in meeting the MDGs and ensure that the United Nations Foundation and the various United Nations programmes and specialized agencies provide greater support for capacity-building programmes in developing countries. It should enhance coordination between international development policy and monetary, financial and trading regimes and create an enabling international environment for developing countries.

The suspension of the Doha round serves nobody's interests. Members of the World Trade Organization should demonstrate political will, speedily resume the Doha development round and work towards a comprehensive and balanced outcome.

Non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to be more extensively and deeply involved in development cooperation. Their efforts and those of Governments should complement each other.

The establishment of the Human Rights Council echoes the calling of our times. Member States have a common responsibility to make the Council a dynamic and effective body. The Council should give greater attention to massive and gross violations of human rights caused by armed conflicts and should support the international community in its efforts to prevent conflicts, restore peace and combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

The Council should attach equal importance to economic, social and cultural rights and encourage the international community and United Nations agencies to take effective measures to support countries in their efforts to realize their right to development.

The Council should continue to give special attention to the rights of women, children, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups to ensure that they enjoy the same level of respect as others.

The Council should promote dialogue and cooperation on an equal footing between countries of different social systems and levels of development, address human rights issues properly and reject double standards and politicization.

For decades, relations between China and African countries have been characterized by sincerity and mutual support. We have conducted our cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, while safeguarding sovereignty and independence and promoting social and economic development in our respective countries. All that has served to bring about significant benefits for the Chinese and African peoples alike.

China and Africa will hold a summit and the third ministerial meeting of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Beijing from 3 to 5 November. Focusing on the theme of friendship, peace, cooperation and development, Chinese and African leaders will discuss ways to establish and foster a new type of strategic partnership featuring political equality and mutual trust, win-win economic cooperation and cultural exchanges. They will also draft a blueprint to enhance China-Africa cooperation. China is committed to peaceful development. Africa, which is home to the largest number of developing countries, is committed to achieving stability and renewal. Stronger ties between China and Africa will contribute to South-South cooperation and international peace and development.

The conduct of China's diplomacy aims to safeguard world peace and promote common development. China is committed to developing itself through safeguarding and promoting world peace through its own development. We are pursuing development that is peaceful, inclusive, cooperative and harmonious in nature. We will endeavour to promote the fundamental interests of our own people in harmony with the common interests of other peoples and to pursue peace, promote development and resolve disputes through cooperation.

China is dedicated to building a harmonious world. It hopes to increase mutual respect and understanding with other countries and to live in harmony with them. China respects the right of a country to choose its own path to development. It supports equal participation by different countries in international affairs and democracy in international relations. It works to enhance mutual benefits, win-win outcomes and global prosperity through sharing the benefits of economic globalization and technological progress. China seeks to promote a diversified world and advance human civilization by furthering dialogue, understanding and mutual enrichment between different cultures. China is committed to advancing human progress by enhancing dialogue, building mutual trust with other countries and working with them to address global issues.

China will continue to demonstrate to the world that it is an important force for global peace and development and that the Chinese people will remain trustworthy friends and cooperation partners to the world's peoples.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Per Stig Moeller, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Mr. Moeller (Denmark): The global game has changed. Interdependence and globalization are occurring at an unprecedented speed. With globalization, the concept of national sovereignty has changed. The international order based on the nation State — established in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia — is being challenged. Non-State actors are becoming more and more influential on the global scene. Private militias and transnational criminal movements are increasingly responsible for conflicts that used to be between State actors, as well as for undermining agreements entered into and adhered to by States.

The boundaries between domestic and foreign policy are changing. Developments in one part of the world often trigger unintended actions in other parts of the world. If we look the other way when faced with conflicts and human suffering, problems will grow, they will not disappear. To meet the goals and challenges confronting the global community, we need more than ever a dynamic and proactive United Nations.

The United Nations has to proactively address the agenda set by globalization, and it must be able to change in order to effectively meet and deliver on the new challenges. It is in everybody's interest to have an efficient United Nations. The Organization adds moral force to the international community's actions in a globalized world. An effective United Nations can alleviate the negative effects of globalization and turn it into a positive force. All of us have to work to ensure that the necessary reform steps to be initiated.

Last September's World Summit set an ambitious agenda for the United Nations and the General Assembly. I am pleased that we have achieved

considerable results. Prominent examples include the establishment of the Human Rights Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Central Emergency Response Fund. The two new organs represent a long overdue institutional modernization of the United Nations that, if used as intended, will help the United Nations to address new challenges. That is why Denmark has put so much effort into helping to foster the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission.

With Burundi and Sierra Leone on the agenda, the Peacebuilding Commission has chosen two nations in need, but also two nations willing to join forces with the international community in their endeavour to build their nations.

As it should, the Human Rights Council allows for closer scrutiny by the international community of domestic affairs — not because we wish to punish but because we wish to help improve. Such scrutiny is a desirable monitoring mechanism to ensure the protection of people from abuse by their own Governments. Let us avoid politicizing the work of this new body and instead, in a spirit of cooperation, ensure that the Human Rights Council is successful in meeting the objectives laid down by the General Assembly. In that context, I would also like to draw attention to the decision by the Human Rights Council to recommend to the sixty-first session of the General Assembly the adoption of the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. Work on the draft declaration has been under way for more than 20 years. It is high time that we, the Governments, approve that landmark instrument aimed at furthering the rights and aspirations of the world's indigenous peoples.

In June, as President of the Security Council, Denmark sought to highlight the importance of strengthening international law. We picked up the torch from the 2005 World Summit by calling a special meeting on the critical role of international law in fostering stability and order in international relations (see S/PV.5474). The Security Council spoke out clearly in favour of international law, both in general terms and with regard to specific topics such as delisting with respect to sanctions. Denmark will continue to pursue those topics, and we call upon all Member States to join us.

The reform agenda is far from exhausted. The Security Council should be reformed to better reflect the world of today. Furthermore, we need to make substantial progress on mandate review and management reform during this session of the General Assembly. Otherwise, we will not be able to meet the challenges. Member States should not micromanage the United Nations, but should build a strong and fast-responding Organization to meet new challenges.

The United Nations must play a strong role in order to secure positive gains from globalization for developing countries. Denmark eagerly looks forward to the recommendations of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence. Our aim is to enhance on the ground the efficiency and impact of United Nations development cooperation.

It is a cause for concern that we have witnessed the resurgence of the notion of respect for national sovereignty as a justification for inaction in international affairs. There is of course no denying that nation-States remain the constituent part of the international system and of this very Organization. But respect for sovereignty can never become an excuse for accepting massive human rights violations. That was the key message from the Summit last year, when heads of State pronounced their support for the notion of the responsibility to protect.

The Security Council has consistently worked to uphold the sovereignty of Lebanon since 2004. In August of this year, the Council intervened to stop the war between Hizbollah and Israel, and decided to send thousands of peacekeepers to help the Lebanese Government extent its authority to all parts of the country. We call upon all regional players to work constructively towards that goal. Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) must be fully respected by all parties. Denmark is actively considering ways to promote the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), including by assisting the Secretary-General in his endeavours to find ways forward on the political aspects.

The war between Hizbollah and Israel proved the volatility of the Middle East. For decades, the international community has sought to address the Arab-Israeli conflict, which continues to breed hatred and fanaticism. We must support moderate forces for reform and empower them to stand up against centrifugal tendencies. We need to redouble our efforts to finally achieve a comprehensive and lasting two-State solution to that tragic conflict. It is in nobody's

interest that the instability in the Middle East continues.

The same goes for the Sudan. The Council's decision last month to continue preparations for a United Nations peacekeeping force to relieve the African Union force and stop the senseless carnage of civilians in Darfur drew sharp criticism from the Government of the Sudan and was denounced as neo-colonialism and a violation of its sovereign rights. But, I ask, whose rights are really being violated here? Rather than the rights of the Government of the Sudan, I submit that it is the right of the population of Darfur to receive protection that is being violated. It is incumbent upon the international community to act if a Government fails to fulfil the responsibility to protect. I call upon the Government of the Sudan to work with us, not against us, in protecting the population of Darfur.

In Afghanistan the security situation continues to be of great concern. We are, individually and collectively, being tested on our commitment to assist the Afghan people on their path towards a just and prosperous future. Warlords, financed by the opium trade, threaten the democratic rights of the people. The United Nations must continue to support the remarkable transformation process undertaken by the Afghan people and their Government.

We wish to see a stronger role for the United Nations in Iraq, in order to contribute to peaceful and democratic development. A necessary precondition to improve the situation is better living conditions for all in Iraq. Needless to say, it is in our common interest to assist the Iraqi people in their struggle to reform and build their country. It must not fall victim to sectarianism and terrorism. If that happens the whole region will become destabilized.

The most serious danger associated with globalization is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Security Council reacted in unity to deplore the 4 July launch of several missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We call upon Pyongyang to return to the Six-Party Talks.

Iran has failed to respond to the demands of the Security Council. We call upon Tehran to suspend enrichment activities and accept negotiations on the generous package.

Weapons of mass destruction and terrorism represent a deadly combination. Terrorism is already in itself one of the major threats to international peace and stability. We all remember the tragedies here in the United States five years ago, as well as the terrorist attacks in London, Madrid, Amman, Bali, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey. I am very pleased that the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) has now been adopted by the General Assembly. That gives us renewed hope that we may also conclude the negotiations on a comprehensive convention this year. I call upon all States to seriously attempt to bridge the differing views that exist with regard to that very important convention, in order that we can combat the scourge of our time, terrorism.

As Chairman of the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee, Denmark is working towards the strengthening of the international fight against terrorism through improved cooperation between the Council and Member States.

Let me conclude my statement by expressing Denmark's sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his tireless efforts to promote a more just, prosperous and peaceful world and for his leadership of the United Nations. For almost 10 years, Kofi Annan has served in an office where expectations for action are not always matched by the requisite powers and the means to act. He has impressively carried a heavy burden through troubled times, and recently has even undertaken new challenges in the Middle East and in the world at large. His act will be a difficult one to follow. Let his heritage be that the stones he lifted do not roll back down the mountain.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Oman.

Mr. Abdulla (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure, Madam, to extend my warmest congratulations to you and your country, the Kingdom of Bahrain, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I am fully confident that your vast experience will guide the work of the Assembly to a successful conclusion. Allow me to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, for the manner in which he conducted the work of the previous session.

I would also like to commend Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, for his efforts to equip this

Organization with the appropriate tools to properly respond to world events and challenges.

This session is convening in difficult times and amid important changes. Despite the successes achieved by the United Nations in establishing the Human Rights Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Central Emergency Response Fund, numerous dangers and challenges still lie ahead. The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories remains very tense as a result of Israel's actions, including killing, terrorizing, collective punishment, the demolition of homes and other practices that run counter to the noble objectives of the peace process. There are requirements and obligations that must be fulfilled in order to reach a peaceful settlement between Israel and the Palestinians.

Hence, we express our support for the call by the League of Arab States to refer the entire Arab-Israeli conflict to the Security Council, in order to find a lasting, comprehensive and peaceful settlement. That call reaffirms the commitment of the Arab States to peace — as a strategic option and a basis for peaceful coexistence between the Arab countries and the State of Israel as envisioned in the Arab peace initiative.

The world has recently witnessed the tragedy of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, with the resulting destruction and huge loss of life and property. We affirm our support to the brotherly Lebanese people in that brutal crisis. We welcome the adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 1701 (2006) and hope that it will enhance security and stability in the region. The positive response to the Secretary-General's call for greater participation in the enhanced United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is a clear indication of the support the international community accords to Lebanon.

My country is deeply concerned by the deteriorating security situation and the internal violence in Iraq. We call upon all parties in Iraq to give precedence to their national interests and to support their National Government in accordance with a conciliatory political programme that would look after the interests of all segments of the Iraqi people.

We welcome the conclusion of the Abuja Peace Agreement between the Sudanese Government and the rebel groups, and we hope that it will stop further bloodshed among the brotherly Sudanese people. We look forward to seeing a positive and effective role by the Security Council in the Sudan, in cooperation with the Sudanese Government.

Although the African continent enjoys immense natural and human resources and potential, it is plagued by conflict, the spread of disease and poverty. While we support the efforts of the African Governments to deal with those difficulties, we also call upon the international community to do all it can to help the African countries to reinforce their efforts.

Environment is the common heritage of all mankind. Conserving the environment is therefore a duty shared by all countries, and we hope that during this session further light will be shed on environmental issues. Aware of the importance of striking a balance between achieving development, on the one hand, and protecting the environment, on the other, my country has launched a national strategy aimed at protecting the environment that incorporates environmental considerations at all stages of planning.

We are making concerted efforts to protect our environment, our territorial waters and our economic areas from pollution. We are also cooperating with a number of national, regional and international organizations and agencies in protecting our natural resources and preventing their deterioration.

All are agreed that globalization has positive aspects. However, it has been noted that in some cases globalization has hurt the interests of developing countries. For that reason, my country supports the call for the establishment of a world trade order that is non-discriminatory and multidisciplinary. Such a framework would seek to achieve a balanced outcome in the decisions of the Doha Round of negotiations. It is our hope that current negotiations on multilateral trade issues, especially those related to agriculture and the service sector, will achieve success in a way that serves the interests and rights of all States equally.

We look forward to seeing the international financial, economic and trade institutions play a positive role in bridging the growth gap between developed and developing countries. We urge those institutions to provide support to developing countries to help them to attract investment funds and to gain access to global markets for their exports, without any restrictions or protectionist measures. In this regard, we welcome the offer of the brotherly State of Qatar to host the International Conference on Financing for Development in 2007.

My country supports the call for a review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) with a view to closing loopholes in the Treaty and guaranteeing the right of all States parties to obtain nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. While we favour a Middle East region free from all weapons of mass destruction, we also call on all parties to the current talks on the Iranian nuclear issue to keep the door open to negotiation, since direct dialogue remains the best way of reaching a suitable compromise on pending contested issues.

An effective international counter-terrorism strategy requires a balance to be struck between security considerations and respect for human rights conventions. It is really not wise to endanger the security and stability of States on the ground of combating terrorism, nor is it fair to subject innocent people to injustice or mistreatment on the basis of mere suspicion.

Bearing in mind that human beings are the centre and focus of development, my country has designed policies aimed at the self-fulfilment of Omani citizens and the development of their potential. Social welfare programmes for individuals with special needs are a key element in the rehabilitation of those groups, so that they can participate in society alongside other citizens. In cooperation with the International Labour Organization, my country has also adopted a rehabilitation strategy focusing on local communities.

Emphasizing the comprehensive nature of the development process, my country has devoted special attention to the role of women by encouraging them to participate in development. We have introduced a draft national strategy for the advancement of women, which is the result of cooperation between governmental bodies and civil society organizations.

The Sultanate of Oman takes pride in its achievements in the area of childcare. Because of the importance of childhood in securing out investment in human resources, children are given priority in our comprehensive development programme. Our national committee for child protection and welfare was established by Royal Decree No. 71 of 1997.

Today, more than ever before, we need an effective United Nations that is able to shoulder its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. That can be achieved only through concerted efforts and political will on the part of Member States, which will enable the Organization to carry out its mission and responsibilities in the best possible manner.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

Mr. Steinmeier (Germany) (*spoke in German; English text provided by the delegation*): Please accept my congratulations, Madam, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I wish you every success. I should also like to express my sincere thanks to the President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session for his dedicated work and to wish him every success in his future endeavours.

The world events that have taken place over the past 60 years are reflected more graphically in Germany than in almost any other country. Until 1989, the wall and the barbed wire across our country symbolized the division of Europe and the rest of the world into two blocs. Since then, Germany has become the embodiment of the successful overcoming of that division.

Both division and the overcoming of division have influenced our view of the world. For 45 years, peace in Germany was due largely to the friendship and the political and military protection of partner countries, which took their responsibility seriously. That experience shaped the political outlook of Germans. That is why we, too, are now shouldering our responsibility, both in Europe and in other parts of the world. In the context of the United Nations, that means that a reunited Germany believes it has an obligation to do everything it can to support the Organization in creating a more peaceful and more equitable world.

German soldiers and police officers are taking part in numerous peace missions that are either led or mandated by the United Nations. In the Western Balkans, Germany has provided the largest contingent of peacekeeping troops in Kosovo and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Germany is playing a prominent role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Germany is leading the European operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and is supporting the first free elections there in 40 years. Germany is engaged in the Sudan through its support for the African Union Mission in the Sudan and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan. And, at this very moment, German navy vessels

are on their way to the Lebanese coast, where they will reinforce the United Nations peacekeeping force. Germany will contribute up to 2,400 troops to that peace mission.

Germany supports a policy of dialogue and the peaceful reconciliation of differing interests. We firmly believe that political conflicts cannot be resolved through military force or military victories. Peace is brought about by engaging in political dialogue, establishing economic ties and giving people tangible hope for the future. If the parties to a conflict are unable to overcome political divisions on their own, the international community, represented by the United Nations, has an obligation to help. That is the guiding principle of our foreign policy.

As Minister for Foreign Affairs of a reunited Germany, I have been profoundly influenced by German and European history. On that basis, I have a concrete mandate for German foreign policy: we must do everything in our power to prevent the world from dividing once again into hostile blocs. Politicians in every country have a responsibility in that regard. Everyone can — and, I believe, everyone must — make a contribution. It is my firm conviction that anyone who instigates antagonism between people of different cultures and religions is not living up to his or her responsibility.

No one should interpret the involvement of Germany and its partners in the Balkans, in Afghanistan, in the Sudan and in Lebanon as an aggressive global campaign waged by the West against Islam. In a world that has grown closer together than ever before, we do not need exclusion or polarization. Rather, we need the courage to promote understanding and to engage in dialogue.

In the Middle East, it is crucial, following Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), on Lebanon, that we seize the opportunity to promote understanding. I call on all parties to the conflict in the region to act responsibly. Those who want their children and grandchildren to live in peace instead of violence, in safety instead of fear, in prosperity instead of poverty, must have the courage to embark on new paths rather than simply cultivating long-standing enmities.

The principles for a settlement are clear: Israel's right to exist, on the one hand, and the establishment of a Palestinian State, on the other. Those were the core concerns of the Road Map, to which, I am firmly convinced, we must return. However, if we are to ensure lasting success, we must do everything we can to include everyone involved, even if that seems a roundabout way to achieve our goal. Therefore, I hope that we will succeed in persuading Syria to engage in a constructive dialogue. We need stronger engagement on the part of the international community, particularly the Middle East Quartet. I welcome the Quartet's recent meeting.

In Afghanistan, the international community is demonstrating how the principle of responsibility can be put into practice in concrete terms. After 23 years of civil war, political structures are now being developed. Millions of refugees have returned to their home country. Just as important, young people — including girls — can go to school again. However, drug cultivation and the security situation pose a threat to the progress that has been made, at least in certain regions of the country. We, the international community cannot allow the successes to date to be brought to naught.

In the Western Balkans, too, war is a thing of the past; I am very pleased to note that that is so. The political and military commitment of the United Nations, the United States of America, Russia and the European Union has played a key role in this. In Kosovo, the task now is to ensure that the two parties to the conflict take their responsibility for peace and stability seriously. A solution to the status of Kosovo, which has remained unresolved for many years, is overdue. Germany staunchly backs the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy, President Martti Ahtisaari. We believe that stability cannot be achieved if the will of only the majority population of Kosovo is expressed. Kosovo Serbs must be guaranteed adequate protections as a minority.

[redacted] need only glance at a map of Africa to understand how important the peace and stability of the Sudan and the Congo are for the African continent as a whole. I believe that instability and conflicts in Africa also have a direct impact on Europe. For this reason, too, Germany is supporting the United Nations in its efforts to find a solution to the conflicts in those two countries.

While the United Nations peace mission in southern Sudan — the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) — has made an effective contribution

towards the implementation of the Peace Agreement between northern and southern Sudan, peace in Darfur is still a long way off. Neither the Sudanese Government nor rebel groups can be absolved of responsibility for the humanitarian disaster in the west of the country. Nevertheless, I am firmly convinced that a lasting solution to the conflict will be possible only if we work with, not against, them.

As members are aware, over the past few years Germany, together with France and Britain, supported by the United States of America, Russia and China, has been intensively seeking a solution to the conflict regarding Iran's nuclear programme. Let me state clearly that no one wants to deny Iran the right to use nuclear energy peacefully. Nor is isolating Iran the objective of the diplomatic effort. On the contrary, we hope that Iran will become a reliable and responsible partner in the crisis-stricken Middle East. That is why, on 6 June, we offered Iran a package aimed at far-reaching cooperation. The package includes proposals for closer diplomatic, economic and security cooperation, and expressly acknowledges Iran's right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

However, the international community also rightly expects cooperation and transparency from Iran. If Iran were to prove that the suspicions of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are unfounded and if it sent a clear sign that it truly intends to use its nuclear programme for peaceful purposes only, that could open the door to a development which benefits the people of Iran and the entire region.

It is now up to the Government in Tehran to face up to its responsibility. The decision in favour of peace and stability in the entire Middle East requires courage. I call upon Iran to end the current phase of procrastination and give a clear sign of trust so that we can look to the future together and can finally sit down at the negotiating table.

Resolution of the nuclear dispute with Iran is urgent. However, the challenges of the proliferation of nuclear weapons go far beyond that. We must act now if we want to halt the erosion of the non-proliferation regime. The next attempt to implement the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons must not fail.

Not only Iran but also other countries are thinking about developing enrichment technology. We will have to develop new instruments if we want to prevent such risks from arising.

I am therefore strongly in favour of not merely exchanging ideas on the multilateralization of the fuel cycle and transferring responsibility for uranium enrichment to the international community, but of further developing such ideas into concrete options. I therefore appeal for greater efforts to find solutions, working together with the IAEA.

The conflicts in the Middle East, Afghanistan, the Western Balkans and the Sudan, and the dispute with Iran, as well as the fight against international terrorism, have one thing in common: in none of those cases is the West taking a hostile stance against Islam. Nor do they involve a clash of civilizations. Rather, they are very diverse conflicts involving diverse interests.

I believe that there is just one link, albeit a very different one: each one of those conflicts can be resolved only with a willingness and ability to engage in dialogue. That is because dialogue gets everyone concerned involved, engages them and does not allow them to shirk their responsibility for resolving a conflict. However, a policy of cooperation and dialogue does not mean talking at any cost. Those who want to engage in dialogue must meet some basic prerequisites. In my view, these include a readiness to bring about a peaceful reconciliation of interests — that is to say, they must be prepared to renounce violence and respect the position of the other side — and their own position must be consistent and credible. If these prerequisites are not met, then no dialogue with any chance of success can get off the ground.

I am firmly convinced that a dialogue beyond cultural borders can succeed because, despite all of our differences, we are living in one world. The various cultures of the world have more in common than political rabble-rousers would have us believe. People everywhere have the same fundamental interests: they want to live in peace and security, free from poverty. They want good health care and good schools for their children. No responsible Government would ever want to withhold these from its people — nor should they ever be allowed to try to do so.

The United Nations and its agencies and programmes embody this vision — and it is this vision that makes the United Nations so indispensable. I am convinced that we will need the United Nations more than ever in the coming decades. The number and the

scale of crises in the world are increasing. That could bring about a renaissance of the United Nations even in countries that are sometimes still sceptical about the world Organization.

The effectiveness of the United Nations, its ability to act and the confidence it inspires as the international community's main multilateral Organization are closely connected. Everyone can see how necessary transparent structures and effective institutions are for the United Nations. The reform of the United Nations — the entire Organization, not just the Security Council — should not, therefore, simply remain on the agenda; concrete progress must be made.

We see the expectations placed on the United Nations rising. This is especially urgent in the case of the review of mandates, as well as management and financial reform. Germany pledges to support this endeavour, because we must reform if we, as members of the international community, wish to remain effective. We owe that not only to the United Nations but, above all, to the people in whose name we shoulder responsibility together.

The President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Rita Kieber-Beck, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein.

Mrs. Kieber-Beck (Liechtenstein): Madam President, let me first of all express my happiness at seeing you preside over the General Assembly. Your election sends a clear signal concerning the ever-stronger participation of women in decision-making processes worldwide. We value your impressive track record on women's rights in particular, and we will assist you in every possible way in the fulfilment of your difficult task.

We can take pride in the many accomplishments achieved during the past session, most prominently the establishment of the Human Rights Council and of the Peacebuilding Commission. These are important institutional advances which offer us a real opportunity to do things differently and to do them better. They do not, however, automatically guarantee the results that we had in mind when we made the decision that new institutions were needed. No structural change, however skilfully crafted, can bring about substantive change in and of itself. In the area of human rights in particular, we must increase our efforts in order to create the truly new international discourse that is needed, based on cooperation and the even-handed implementation of international standards. Only a new partnership in the field of human rights, with the full participation of all stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, can ensure that people worldwide enjoy all the human rights to which they are entitled. It is only through such a new partnership that we will be able to make the quantum leap towards an era of implementation.

One of the major issues that we did not resolve following the World Summit in September 2005 is Security Council reform. Here again, we are of the view that structural change is needed but that it is not sufficient in itself. On the one hand, the Council must be given a new structure and a different composition in order to maintain its credibility worldwide. It must better reflect the geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century, which are fundamentally different from those that prevailed at the time of the creation of the Organization. But we must also address the equally urgent necessity to improve the way in which the Council goes about its daily business.

Time and again we have witnessed occasions on which the Council did not live up to its mandate, as enshrined in the Charter, to act on behalf of the membership as a whole. A better representation of the views of the general membership is therefore essential for its effectiveness and credibility, in particular through a stronger involvement on the part of non-members of the Council that have a particular interest in, or expertise on, a given subject. We are satisfied to see that the Council has taken a step in the right direction in that regard, and we will remain committed to helping to improve its working methods.

Working methods and enlargement are clearly complementary elements of Security Council reform. It would appear that, after a pause of more than a year, it is time to try our hand again at expanding the Council, preferably through a sober approach that takes into account the experiences gained in 2005.

Like many before me, I would like to applaud Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his outstanding tenure at the helm of the Organization. One key element of his legacy is the high priority he has attached to the rule of law. We agree that the core strength of the United Nations is its solid grounding in international law, its proud track record in promoting international law, and the unique legitimacy it can provide in making decisions. In our globalized world,

in which non-State actors play an ever-increasing role, clear rules are needed which are applied equally to everyone, in a transparent manner.

However, we have yet to witness the advent of an era of the rule of law, as called for by the Secretary-General. On the contrary, we have witnessed a dangerous erosion of international law, in particular international humanitarian law, and we must urgently find ways to place the issue of the rule of law high on the agenda of the Organization. We will work with others to ensure that the General Assembly makes concrete progress on this matter during this session.

While there are negative trends in the area of respect for international law, we have made some significant advances, in particular in the area of international justice. It is now commonly understood that there can be no impunity for international crimes and that no one who has committed them is immune. This is a historic development which has found its most powerful expression in the establishment of the International Criminal Court. The Court is now seized of three situations, one of which was referred to it by the Security Council, and more than 100 States have become parties to the Rome Statute. This very strong momentum can be maintained only if States and, indeed, the Organization lend their active support to a judicial institution which fully relies on such cooperation in gathering evidence and arresting indictees. Most importantly, we must realize that peace and justice are, in the long run, complementary concepts, and we must uphold the principle that there can be no amnesty for the worst crimes under international law.

The international fight against terrorism poses a particularly complex challenge in the area of the rule of law. First, we must complement the existing international legal framework by adopting a comprehensive convention against terrorism. We have put forward our ideas in this respect and hope that they can help in reaching an agreement, which is long overdue. Secondly, it must be clear that the fight against terrorism and the observance of human rights and international humanitarian law are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Human rights are at the core of the value system of the international community, as we all recognized at the Summit last year. Curtailing them in the name of the fight against terrorism would therefore play into the hands of terrorists, who fight this very system with fanatic zeal. Last but not least, the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, must lead by example in upholding due process and the rights of individuals.

When I spoke in this Hall last year, I presented a mixed assessment of the outcome of the World Summit. On the one hand, I expressed disappointment at the vagueness or even complete absence of some aspects of United Nations reform, but I also warmly welcomed some real advances. The recognition of the responsibility to protect constituted such an advance; indeed, it was a real milestone in the Outcome Document. Today, we must acknowledge that the international community has not followed up the commitment it made at the World Summit with concrete action.

The situation in Darfur, irrespective of the definition of the crime in question, clearly falls within the scope of the responsibility to protect, but we have yet to see the action necessary in accordance with our common commitment to protect civilian populations.

The United Nations, in spite of its shortcomings, remains the only such Organization of global reach and is uniquely placed to address the complex challenges the world is facing today. However, it will be capable of living up to this role only if we re-establish the institutional balance within the system. In particular, the General Assembly must reassert its role as a central policymaking body and work on a par with the Security Council.

The most prominent topics for the Organization in the coming weeks are clear: the situation in Darfur, the Middle East, the nuclear programme of Iran and the appointment of a new Secretary-General. All these topics are dealt with in the Security Council, while the General Assembly plays at best a secondary role. The Assembly must, therefore, address in parallel, and make progress on, the development agenda in all its aspects, system-wide coherence, disarmament, Security Council reform and other priority areas of the work of the organization. A better division of work between the two most important organs will make the Organization as a whole more effective and more efficient. It is, therefore, in the common interest of all States to make the General Assembly the central policymaking body it was designed to be by the founding fathers.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.